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THE

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PREFACE.

WHILST engaged in the profound researches necessary to verify the facts contained in the veracious legend of the golden-haired son of Arvon, "Owen Tudor," the Editor lighted on some curious particulars relating to the immediately succeeding times and fortunes of the "Maid of Orleans," which, not being generally known, it was modestly thought might prove interesting to the world. In fact the singular explanation given of what that varying cosmopolitan was once pleased to consider miraculous in the career of the amazing woman named, is so exclusively contained in the poetical chronicle in the Editor's sole possession, written by the minstreless Huéline de Troye, entitled "Gestes de la Pucelle d'Orléans," that it seemed like an ungenerous concealment of an historical light to withhold it. The opportunities enjoyed by that lady, as a contemporary of the events delineated, and who, being the wife of the favourite minister of Charles VII., the Lord de la Trimouille, may well be supposed to be in the secret of their internal workings, give a value and authenticity to the materials employed in the production of this true chronicle which may be abundantly tested by reference to more accessible historical memoranda. Accordingly, it is here presented to the notice of the benevolent reader; not indeed in the rhymed and poetical form of the original, in consequence of the great aversion entertained by the present public for that style of composition,

but not the less to be relied on as a faithful picture of the times and deeds of the heroic restorer of the French monarchy.

> "An old rude song, that suited well
> That ruin wild and hoary."

What parts are invented or elucidated in a novel manner by the said minstreless, is left to the discrimination of the judicious reader, who is, however, warned that the literal words and doings of the Maid and her contemporaries are so frequently introduced that he must be on his guard not to fall into the error of the Athenian audience, which condemned as unnatural and badly imitated the real utterances of an animal (we find it below prefatial dignity to mention what animal), while it lauded the art of a mimic to the skies!

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THE MAID OF ORLEANS.

CHAPTER I.

VAUCOULEURS.

"Vouchsafe to those that have not read the story,
That I may prompt them."—*Henry V.*

Among all her pageants, History has not often presented a more striking and brilliant succession of events than the career of Henry V., king of England, and heir of France; nor a more solemn example of the vanity of human hopes and greatness than in the sudden doom that closed it. The magnificent titles won by his valour and policy, served the victor of Agincourt little more than to swell the pomp of the proclamation wherewith his heralds broke their staffs over his sepulchre. A few more weeks would have put the great prize, for which he had toiled and battled so long, in his grasp, for they conducted to the dust the woe-worn phantom of French royalty, Charles, sixth of the name in France, whose powers he already possessed, and whose titles he was to inherit. By so much did the crowned madman survive his sage rival, the vanquished, the victor, the aged and exhausted grandsire, his young and vigorous son-in-law!

The consequences that might well have been anticipated from this abrupt event did not, however, ensue. That massive crown, into which Henry had fused two potent ones, was upheld over the brows of his infant heir by a hand of almost as strong grasp as his own. John, duke of Bedford, succeeded his brother in the administration of the French conquests; a prince whose calm sagacity and perseverance, seconded by great warlike skill and energy, filled even the gap left by the hero-king. By policy or arms he gained or over-awed nearly all the great feudatories of France, preserving the fidelity of the most powerful of the number, Philip, duke of Burgundy, by a personal alliance, and by keeping alive his resentment for the murder of his father, assassinated at the Bridge of Montereau, by the command, or, at all events, by the partisans, and in the presence, of the Dauphin, Charles, who now claimed the allegiance of France, as legitimate successor to his father, Charles VI.

With these advantages, and though thwarted by the factions that raged at home between the ambitious and overbearing Cardinal Beaufort and the Protector Gloucester, the duke of Bedford gradually worked on in the great woof of his brother's policy, until it seemed

to approach completion, and showed all the gorgeous hues of the original design. The destruction of the French monarchy, and the transfer of the crown from the house of Valois to that of Plantagenet, was, in the opinion of most politicians, at hand, when, towards the close of the year 1428, the English laid siege to Orleans. The fall of that strong city would complete the conquest of the whole north of France, enable them to cross the Loire, and carry the war into the south, where the possession of Guienne, and the alliance of Burgundy, yielded every facility for the conquest of the few provinces still adhering to the cause of the Dauphin.

The vital nature of the struggle was equally apparent in the unwearied energy of the attack and defence of Orleans. Contrary to the custom of armies in those days, the English kept the field during winter, and with patient toil bound the city in a chain of forts, whose links of adamant compressed it gradually into total isolation. In vain did the courage of the citizens, and the efforts of the chivalry of France, oppose the steady progress of the besiegers. The loss even of their famous general, the earl of Salisbury, seemed in nowise to discourage them. Talbot, Suffolk, Fastolfe, and other renowned commanders, carried out his plans with consummate skill and valour.

Little fear was entertained by the besiegers that their operations might be disturbed by any exterior force. The battles of Crevant and Verneuil, and, more recently, that of Rouvrai, quaintly styled, of the Herrings, as it was fought to cut off a supply of Lent provisions to the English camp, confirmed that opinion of the superiority of their enemies which had become traditionary in the minds of the French commonalty, from the age of Cressy and Poictiers. And little hope could be entertained of relief by the valiant defenders of Orleans. Courage was almost extinguished by perpetual rebuffs even in the hearts of the noblest chivalry. And the factions raging among the French chiefs, their struggles to wring the little power remaining to their prince from one another, neutralized any aid their swords might have afforded. The young King Charles himself, naturally indolent, fond of pleasure, and purposely kept in inactivity by his ambitious courtiers, was considered, both by friends and foes, as rather a spectator than a sharer in the conflict.

The confidence of the English in their approaching triumph became hourly more strikingly manifested. While the siege was vigorously pressed, the Regent busied himself in making preparations for the decisive campaign beyond the Loire, that was to follow the fall of Orleans. The province of Champagne was completely subjected; but certain neighbouring countries, which had hitherto escaped the scourge of war, suddenly fell under it, belonging to the cardinal-duke of Bar, who professed the strictest neutrality, but who warmly favoured the cause of Charles VII. It was not until the English power had reached so high a point of prosperity, that the politic Regent thought proper to reveal his knowledge of the circumstance. But one fair morning the people of the district of Commercy, bordering on Champagne, were thunderstruck by the apparition of a little army, which descended upon them as if from the clouds! Commercy

was caught in *flagrante delicto:* it was found assembling in arms, in obedience to an edict of the Dauphin, calling forth the *arrière ban* of all the countries that owned allegiance to him. Agents of Regnault de Chartres, archbishop of Rheims, one of Charles's most devoted partisans,—on a proper application of certain persuasives familiar to the judicial eloquence of the fifteenth century,—confessed that they were engaged in this purpose under pretext of assembling the vassals of the great fief of Commercy to render homage to the heiress, who had just attained her majority. This lady was niece to the archbishop, and was commonly called the Heiress of Commercy, from her long nonage, though her proper title was that of Baroness.

In consequence of this indiscretion of its chiefs, the castle, town, and whole territory of Commercy were seized and declared forfeit by the invaders. The heiress herself fell into their hands, and was detained for the purpose of extorting a large ransom, or as a revengeful retaliation on the archbishop of Rheims. One of the two leaders of the invasion was a personal enemy of that prelate. This was the great ecclesiastical prince, Pierre Cauchon, bishop of Beauvais, who, supported by the English interest, of which he was a zealous ally, had aspired to the metropolitan dignity in the Church of France, but was defeated by the papal preference for Regnault de Chartres, and by the general dislike of the clergy to a chief who had proved himself, in his own diocese, the most despotic and arrogant of rulers. This private pique had, no doubt, a great deal to do with the generous offer made to the Regent Bedford by the bishop, who volunteered the aid of his own troops to suppress the preparations in Commercy, of which he was also the first to gain intelligence. Yet it was said that the Regent himself was averse to the enterprise, and would not have consented to its being undertaken, but through esteem to the other leader of the expedition, on whom he wished to confer some signal reward for military exploits of the most brilliant character. This commander was the renowned general, Sir John Fastolfe, a favoured friend and pupil of the Regent, and conqueror in the battle of Rouvrai, where, with seven hundred Englishmen, he defeated a French army of as many thousands. The Regent had perhaps another reason in departing from his usually temperate and conciliating policy. After the death of the earl of Salisbury, his successor, the Lord Talbot, differed so completely from Fastolfe in his plans of carrying on the siege of Orleans, that the expedition to Commercy was possibly devised as a means of preventing the two generals from coming to open contest. The popularity of both leaders was so high, that a concussion might have produced the most dangerous results.

The consternation excited by the invasion throughout the countries of Bar and Brie was increased by the composition of the forces employed in the service. Only a few English, the personal followers of the Dragon Knight, as Sir John Fastolfe was called by the French peasantry, from his insignia of the Garter and the renown of his deeds of arms, were among the invaders. The main body consisted of Norman vassals of the bishopric of Beauvais, and of a band of

mercenaries in the pay of the prelate, known and dreaded throughout France, from the name of their brutal commander and their own cruelties, as the Skinners of Franquet d'Arras. But by no one were the movements of the new possessors of Commercy watched with more reasonable grounds of disquiet than by Sir Robert de Baudricourt, governor of Vaucoleurs, ostensibly for the cardinal-duke of Bar, its lord, but to all actual intents and purposes for King Charles of France. This town, commanding the fruitful valley of the Meuse and the passes into Burgundy, seemed so likely a step in the progress of an invasion to the south, that the anxiety of its guardian was kept perpetually astir.

It was market-day in Vaucouleurs at the time when our chronicle commences, but the usual peaceful bustle of such a scene was so largely intermingled with military preparations and precautions, that it rather resembled the head-quarters of a commissariat established in a newly taken town.

An abrupt, massive tower of stone over the main-gate of Vaucouleurs formed, with a cluster of irregular buildings around it, the governor's residence, the town-house, and the principal strength of the place. It was strongly guarded, and every cart or wain of the most harmless appearance—laden with shivering sheafs of corn, or hay, or chestnuts—was rigidly examined before it was permitted to pass between the outward and inner gate of the citadel, and so into the market-place. Spears were thrust in as deeply as they would go, and at the slightest cause of suspicion, the whole heap was overturned, and searched to the planks of the waggon, by military surveyors who evidently took a lively interest in the task. The square before the tower was covered with scattered booths and stands of various agricultural produce, around a rich Gothic cross in the centre, on the steps of which the butter-wives and dairy-women enjoyed by immemorial prescription the right of displaying their cleanly wares, their snowy aprons, head-dresses of dazzling colours, sun-browned visages, and lively eyes.

It seemed to be a day of extraordinary excitement, though usually one of bustle and animation. The inhabitants of Vaucouleurs, in addition to chafferings and conflicts of opinion on the value of the articles offered by the country people for sale, had to exchange all the alarming rumours, fears, and predictions of evil that haunted every homestead within a very extensive sweep of Commercy. They had to join lamentations on the dreadful fate that awaited the whole country, for it was concluded without doubt that the Meuse was now to become the theatre of the woes that had long devasted the Seine and Loire. The certainty that Orleans, reduced to extremities by famine, could no longer oppose the progress of the invaders; and the projected flight of the king into Dauphiny; were news that struck deep hopelessness into the hearts of a population else very well inclined to his cause. Earnestly did both townspeople and country folk labour to impress these menacing facts on each other, and the probability that Vaucouleurs would soon have to sustain a siege, the one side to abate, and the other to enhance, the value of the

articles exposed for sale. "You will be starved, Maitre Jean, if you do not buy at any price!" "You will have all taken from you, Maitre Pierre, at no price, if you do not sell at any!" was the pith of many a weary jangle on this market-day in Vaucouleurs.

So general was the interest felt in the topics above alluded to, that there seemed scarcely any devoted to a circumstance which was else certain to have roused the most eager curiosity. Two or three carts, on which were certain wooden edifices large enough to be inhabited by many persons, after the fashion of tinkers and gipsies, and covered with a species of coarse canvass, painted with the most extraordinary and horrible devices, traversed the market-place, drawn by mules with tinkling bells on their harness, and escorted by a train of young novices of some order of mendicant friars, who chaunted a *Veni Creator* in a remarkably clear, melodious, and regulated harmony. Little attention followed their progress, and yet the important announcement had just been made at the market-cross that the excellent chaunters were the peerless actors of mysteries and moralities known in France by the title of the Companions of Friar Richard of the Passion, unjustly expelled from Paris by the English tyrants. All true Frenchmen and lieges of the cardinal-duke of Bar were therefore earnestly exhorted to attend a representation of the Miracles of St. Denis, to be enacted at noonday in the church of St. Saviour, at the rate of one-fifth of a *sol parisis* for every pair of eyes and an indefinite share in the benefits of an indulgence granted by the most reverend lord archbishop and duke of Rheims to all the faithful attending the exhibition.

Already, in its rudest infancy, the influence of the art of scenic representation over the multitude, in a political point of view, was observed, and put to use by professors of statecraft. Friar Richard and his companions had been driven out of Paris, on a charge of having exerted the talent they possessed in the exhibition of the religious plays, which had lately become a favourite amusement of the people, to excite hatred and resistance to the English domination. Friar Richard was almost the first of his order which reinvented the dramatic art, who had a real genius, at least for stage-effect, and he acquired for himself and the young friars he had trained to the office an extraordinary popularity; but the zeal of his partisanship to the cause of Charles VII. soon betrayed him into dangerous excesses, in the way of vituperation and prophecies against the English masters of Paris. His allegories became too thinly veiled to escape even a military observation, that regarded with a strange mixture of contempt and reverence such merely mental but religious exercitations.

Expelled from the capital, but animated to fiercer exertions against those who had become his personal oppressors, Friar Richard formed what was possibly the first strolling company of players on record. Attended by those younger and more zealous disciples who adhered to him after his expulsion, and with such properties as they were enabled to rescue from sequestration, Friar Richard of the Passion rambled into every town, castle, and village of France with his religious shows, and wherever he might, without incurring too much

danger, repeated his Parisian offences. The countries that favoured the cause of Charles VII. made him enthusiastically welcome; into those of a contrary disposition he rarely ventured, or only under the most humble and clerical pretext. But his chief work and office were among those of a neutral character, which he desired to convert to his own views of the great contest rending France. His exertions in that direction met with so much success, that at length an edict of the Regent pursued him on his travels, denouncing the severest penalties on any place, in or out of the English obedience, that should presume to give harbourage to this "pestilent friar," as he was succintly described. It was probably on this account that the cautious governor of Vaucouleurs refused to permit Richard himself to abide in the town, though he dared not so far slight the recommendatory letters of the archbishop of Rheims as to refuse his troop permission to exhibit their usual performances; or, very possibly, the religious manager, who was not remarkable for personal courage, and foresaw that an unpleasant altercation might arise on his account with the English at Commercy, thought proper to seclude himself from admiration while in their neighbourhood.

Since so exciting an announcement as the possibility of beholding a headless saint, after undergoing all the troubles of his mortal career, perform high mass to obtain the pity of Heaven on the famished city of Orleans, stirred very little notice, it may be thought that much less was taken of an event that was nevertheless of infinitely more importance. A side postern in the town-house of Vaucouleurs suddenly opened, and two persons were thrust out of it with considerable rudeness, and even a degree of violence, as if dismissed by some offended or outraged authority. But in fact the circumstance was too usual on a day of justice, as the sessions of the royal governors were styled with great unintentional irony, to be thought worthy even of a passing thought. And moreover, the expelled parties turned their backs so abruptly on the bustling groups in the market-place, and passed through the archway into the open country beyond the gates so rapidly, that there was scarcely time for any of the quidnuncs of the town to speculate on their apparition.

CHAPTER II.

THE MEUSE.

> "Mother! since you brought me forth to breathe
> So short a life, Olympius had good right to bequeath
> My short life, honour: yet that right he doth in no degree."
> *Chapman's Homer.*

To the practised eye, a village was visible among the remote windings of the Meuse, towards which the two persons quitting Vaucouleurs evidently took their way. A stranger's glance would scarcely have rested until it reached the towers of the Castle of Commercy, and the vast verdant expanse of its surrounding forest.

In excuse, however, for the slight attention bestowed on them by the few persons they passed, as well as those they left behind, it must be allowed that there was little in the appearance of either stranger to excite the notice of common observers, forming in all ages the infinite majority of mankind. One was a middle-aged man, apparently belonging to the lower order of burgesses; the other, a young peasant-girl of the province, as was abundantly certified by the style of their costume. A passer-by, of more intelligence or curiosity, would at least have paused to take a second survey of the female.

She was a young woman, seemingly about twenty years of age, tall, though not of extraordinary stature, but so symmetrically and powerfully moulded that her figure produced the effect of one much loftier; and, in unison with the strength and beauty of its muscular conformation, her full expanded bosom, the freedom and rapidity of her step, gave her port something of the majesty and limber grace of the mountain deer. Her complexion was much embrowned by the sun, to which her peasant toils had probably exposed her from childhood, but was, perhaps, naturally fair, or at least pale in its hues, though tinged at the moment of our description with a deep, rich glow of indignation or shame, or of both mingled, like the crimson reflection of sunset in the waters of a mountain lake. Her countenance might have been called beautiful by one to whom absolute regularity of features and feminine softness of expression were not essential components in the idea. To others, her noble, but somewhat sternly-carved, lineaments, the cloud that rested on her brows like the sublime sorrow on those of a statue of Nemesis, the touch of fire in the depth of her dark eyes, the passion and fierceness which occasionally gleamed on her lips and nostrils as she pursued the troubled tenor of her meditations, would have been rather terrors than allurements. There was something tempestuous, and fearful even, in the beauty and glossy profusion of the yew-black hair which escaped from her scarlet snood and tossed disorderly in the wind about her, giving, though it might, a sibylline grandeur and gloom to her aspect. And yet an indefinable impression was produced in the beholder's mind that this troubled inspiration was not habitual to the countenance he surveyed; that its characteristic expression was one of profound thoughtfulness, or of that vague and dreamy repose which so often conceals the depth and power of the passions in mighty spirits, stirred only by mighty impulses.

The dress of this marvellous peasant-girl presented no special claims on attention. It was one generally worn by young females of her class in the eastern provinces of France; consisting of a short petticoat of the coarsest blue fustian, adorned with a rosary of black berries hanging from a red leather girdle. Her feet were protected, without being covered on the upper part, by a pair of wooden sandals secured with iron latchets at the ankles; and her upper clothing was a kind of jacket formed from the fur of some forest animal, fastened with leaden tags, and ornamented with a singular reliquary, being a small gold coin set in a heart-shaped Agnus Dei, of the duller metal,

such as were manufactured in convents for the use of the pious poor, who esteemed and preserved them as precious amulets against danger and sickness. The one in question was profusely trimmed with scrolls of Latin prayers and sentences from the psalms, in consecrated wax, and was prettily glazed with coloured glass to shield the contents from contact. A woollen mantle and hood, of different hues, completed the young girl's attire. She carried a sort of piked staff, used by the shepherds of the country in guarding their flocks against the numerous and fierce wolves of the neighbouring mountains, which she occasionally smote on the ground with a somewhat superfluous vehemence, if meant only as a prop to aid her steps.

Her companion was a very different personage. As we have said, he was a middle-aged man, of active, compact figure, with a keen, sly, and somewhat sarcastic visage, habited after the fashion of the lower classes of townspeople, in a fustian doublet, a long cloak and hood of some still coarser stuff resembling baize, a steel belt, in which was stuck a large unsheathed knife, and on his shoulder he carried a long weapon, which was a sort of cross between an axe, a pike, and a saw, called a gisarme. On this ancient life-preserver, its owner brought dangling along a wallet and a leather bottle, both, by their shrunken skins, empty, but which had probably contained the day's provisions.

The young peasant preceded her companion by several steps, and, indeed, in the troubled absorption of her thoughts, seemed almost to have forgotten his presence. On his part, he followed, keeping her in eye with a singular and vague expression of doubt and ridicule, not unmingled with something of the wonder and curiosity a creature of unknown species might raise even in a mind but little devoted to contemplation. And so they continued until they had left the gates of Vaucouleurs at a considerable distance behind. But thought and silence were both too alien to the nature and habits of Durand Laxart, mine host of our Lady's Lily, in Neuchâteau, to be preserved longer than certain personal reasons made him deem advisable ; which was, till he concluded they had gone sufficiently far and fast to satisfy the officers of the captain of Vaucouleurs that they had no idea of slighting the commands wherewith they were driven from his presence.

"St. Julian keep us from such fellow-travellers as thou art, Jeannette!" he then exclaimed. "Not a word hast thou given me, good or bad, since we left the town. All the martyrs on their knees, with myself, as the husband of my wife, permitted to kneel among them, could not have obtained so much of any other woman; and thou leggest it on as if there were something pleasant at our journey's end. For my part, I wonder what it can be, unless thy friends, the fairies, are cooking us something savoury for a welcome, such as hogs' fritters and onions, with a cup of black Montagne to wash the grease down."

The first words of this address, which concluded so relishingly, startled the young girl from her troubled reverie. She paused, glanced round, and tossing her wild locks from her visage in the streaming wind, like the branches of a willow, continued her way at a slower pace.

"The fairies?—But, ay, indeed, I must look to them for my welcome, or to none!" she replied, in a deep, mournful, passionately-toned voice. "Yet deem you, uncle Durand, that no one else in all Domremy will gladden to behold us? Of father, mother, brothers, and sister,—none? They will not have me always with them."

"What welcome can we expect—leaving in disgrace and returning in worse, against the will of your poor father, my respected brother-in-law, and all your family?" returned uncle Durand.

"It is true. Why, so let it be!" said the girl vehemently, but adding, after a moment of thought, in a softer and sadder tone, "But yet, Durand, I shall not be altogether unwelcomed home again. The mountains, the skies, the forests, the streams have not forgotten me! Even this farewell glory in the west glows kindly in mine eyes, as in the old time when I was wont to gaze it into darkness, marvelling what might be the land of its rest! This very air is like the breath of one that loves me: I panted for it as if smothering for the want amid the narrow roofs of Neuchâteau! And since I am despised and rejected, since my words are raving and madness, let them give me the care of the flocks again, and my silence among the hills, with only the blue skies by day, and the stars by night, for company. I am never alone then; in cities only have I learned what loneliness is!"

"Indeed?" inquired Durand, with a suspicious glance at his niece. "Have you no fear of the wolves, that you talk so?—though I have heard you never had even a lamb worried. Well, wise people may follow their own opinions; but had you been *my* daughter—Heaven be praised I have none!—I would not have tempted Providence, or rather the foul fiend, by leaving a brave young lass in the fields by night, staring at the moon! The Enemy (Jesu preserve us!) is a great rambler, and knows a buxom wench when he sees her as well as any Christian of us all! Why dost thou flash thine eyes so fiercely on me, Jeanne? I am in a state of grace and confession—I fear thee not! I mean, child, thou shouldst not look so disrespectfully at thine uncle, who has always been too good to thee, and who bought thee those beads at thy girdle, of which, perchance, thou dost not make so constant a use as were for thy soul's great weal!"

"Let us pray for Orleans, then, and that our Blessed Mother may take pity on France, and on our fair young Dauphin, whom the she-wolf that gave him milk persecutes to the death!—whom all the world deserts!" said the peasant-girl, raising her beads, and murmuring an *Ave Maria* in a low but vehement undertone.

"Thou patterest it like another Christian—as well as Dom Joffrid himself, but not so fast," said Durand, after listening with outstretched ears unto the conclusion, and giving a smack of approval, as if he had tasted some good wine. "Our Lady keep thee ever in the mind to do so, for I well remember the sorcerer that was tried at Toul could not say the *Ave Maria* for his life! But art thou not cured of Orleans yet, after what my Lord de Baudricourt was pleased to say to me,—'Take thy lunatic home to her parents, and bring her to her senses with a whip and a dark room! dost thou think I am skilled in the

leechcraft of diseased wits?' said the noble knight most courteously to me, whom he perceived to be a discreet and trustworthy person. He might have spared his threats about the short shrive and the long rope, for I felt far more inclined never to return on such an errand than he could be not to see me on it. And home I am taking thee, sure enough, if it may be; but truly do they say, 'A rotten bunch and a musty pannier,' for if thou hadst not made me as mad as thyself, what could have induced me to lead thee, or rather to be led by thee, before so grave and potent a lord, to sing him such a song about buttercups as thine?"

"I am not mad,—they are mad that will not listen to me! What said I that is madness?" returned the young girl.

"Didst thou not beseech the knight to his grey beard, to send thee into France, to raise the siege of Orleans?" said Durand, laughing outright. "Art thou not a peasant and a woman, and didst thou not offer to do what valiant nobles and chevaliers start from their sleep if they but dream of attempting? When the brave Bastard himself no longer hopes to keep his father's city, and the Breton Constable skulks like a wounded wolf in a hole, wilt thou save Orleans, and keep the field for France? Wert thou Roland himself, and hadst his horn at thy mouth, as thou hast only thy fierce woman's railing, it were a haught enterprise, to affright the English vultures from their prey!"

"Not by my own arm—not by human might do I purpose to save my king and France!" replied the girl. "The spirits that appeared to me were the glorified saints in heaven; the voices that murmur for ever around me and exhort me forth on my work of redemption, come to mine ears mingled with the remote, sea-like harmony of the celestial harps! And yet, indeed," she continued, in a musing and self-struck tone, "a marvel and a wonder to all time it were, that a woman should save a royal knight,—a peasant redeem a king and a mighty realm! Yet women and shepherds have ever been chosen to work the marvels of God! Was it not David, the shepherd, that slew the giant, and preserved the fear-stricken people when least hope was? Our Blessed Mother, was she not herself a woman? and who knows not how she loves France so well that she has strewn her own lilies on its lovely banner? Hideous lions and leopards yawn for ravage on England's! And being but a woman, tell me, Durand, what Frenchman would dare to fly before his foe when a woman preferred death to shame so base?"

"In very sooth, the bob of a winesop at my lips is the worst blow I did ever willingly take," said Durand, with a smile; "yet methinks, Jeanne, thou dost stir a sort of fierceness in me, as if I could cut a throat myself if I could get fairly behind a man! And once, methought, when thou wert raving to Sir Robert de Baudricourt himself, he looked like a man that knew not what to think or say, and lifted his eyebrows and stared at thee like an owl at the moon, and played with his dagger-belt as puzzled as I have been with a reckoning when I doubted whether to ask mine own of some free companion or not. But, come, 'tis just as well as it is, for thou wottest well, thy father says the apparitions thou hast seen are neither more nor less

than delusions and temptations of the Foul One; and thyself ownest they chiefly presented themselves to thee beneath the Fairy Tree or beside the Haunted Fountain in the forest."

"Because it was chiefly in those spots that I prayed or wept over the woful news that come to us on every wind," replied Jeanne; but a shadow rapidly stole over the enthusiastic light in her countenance, and she relapsed into revery.

"But cheer up, Jeannette," said uncle Durand, uneasily interrupting this pause. "After all, I cannot but love thee, and since thou canst not refuse to take so great a lord's word for it, that all thy fine talk is lunatic raving,—if thou wilt promise to think no more of kings and knights, and wrongs and rights, and other matters beyond the understanding of poor folk—if thou wilt promise to look out for some jolly young sweetheart, like any other lish wench, and not frighten the men with fierce looks and short answers—as has been thy wont hitherto—I will not tell thy father I am bringing thee home because my wife was certain it was thy purpose to run away and serve under a banner, after the fashion of young damsels in general that go to the wars."

"I pray thee, uncle, do not dare to tell my father this!" said Jeanne, and halting, and turning with such vivacity that her kinsman started back a step or two.

"But wilt thou promise—wilt thou promise, Jeannette?" he said, endeavouring to conceal his alarm.

"What shall I promise thee, Durand?—That, if He who hung yon eternal globe of fire in the skies—He who draws the darkness over it by night, to give all things rest,—bids me depart, I will tarry at *thy* command?" said Jeanne, with a withering scorn that almost instantly melted away in a shower of tears, as she continued, "But dost thou think I can inflict any grief upon mine aged sire I shall not suffer a thousandfold?—And Baudricourt himself had heard the prophecy, that a wife should ruin the realm of France, and a virgin restore it! What hath Isabeau de Bavière left undone to destroy her royal son and this realm? For the rest, strive thou with the weakest wind of Heaven, ere thou talkest of resisting Heaven's behest!"

"Well, in good faith, if living in the clouds can keep a woman so, I do believe thou art of the rare kind the prophecy needs," said Durand; but the disdain and haste with which the peasant girl turned away, and resumed her progress, checked the farther flow of his jesting humour.

Uncle Durand was piqued, and kept silence for a while. At last, weary of ruminating on the peculiarities of his ill-assorted fellow-traveller, which he contented himself with ascribing to a degree of insanity, and willing to show himself not so overawed as he was in reality, Durand began first to hum and then to sing aloud. The sweetness of his own voice pleased him so well, that it was not until he had sung the last verse of an almost endless drinking chanson, that he noticed he had unconsciously left the road to Domremy, following the steps of his niece. They had entered under the shadow

of an ancient forest that skirted the way, and was known by the name of the Bois Chesnu, or Hoary Wood.

This sylvan solitude was by no means a favourite one with Durand Laxart, nor indeed with most other persons acquainted with the locality. The extreme age of the trees, the strangely twisted forms of their trunks and intermingled branches, the gray, spectral slime of the moss with which they were nearly all clothed, made it the fitting scene of many a dismal superstition. The terror inspired by woods is probably a relic of the times of paganism, among nations whose ancestors sacrificed to dreadful divinities within such verdant temples; or of the fears and abhorrence infused by the first Christian missionaries into their converts, of the places of the unholy worship relinquished. Durand endeavoured to persuade himself that his companion, whose familiarity with the district he well knew, was leading him to the village by some short path. But though he followed without remonstrance, it was with no great satisfaction, along a green, winding swine-track, almost lost in withered leaves and underwood, and in the glimmering crimson of the sunset among the innumerable branches overhead, until they suddenly emerged on a spot which of all others was least desired or expected by mine host of the Lily of Neuchâteau.

He found himself standing beneath a pile of rocks, which formed part of what had once been a broad inland sweep of the Meuse, whence an ancient castle, whose ruins still occupied the centre, belonging of old to the lords of Domremy, was still called the Island. But it was now deserted by the river, and offered to the gaze a wide undulating valley of flowery verdure, bounded on the left by the silver windings of the river, on the right by the distant mountains of the Vosges, and in front by the forest and towers of Commercy. From these rocks, in plenteous gushes through the lofty clefts in the massive granite, flowed many long, willowy streams of water, which descending into a basin, formed by its own ceaseless action below, composed a fountain that supplied the village with a sweet and bright beverage, but which, nevertheless, enjoyed no very good renown. Whether it was owing to its solitary situation, and to the ancient northern superstitions attached to wells, or to the neighbourhood of a vast beech-tree of still worse character, it is not easy at this distant period to verify; but the tree and fountain together occupied a district within whose haunted pale no peasant at all acquainted with the associated legends ever willingly ventured, save in the broad daylight, and then with vague mislikings and alarm.

The Fairy Tree of Domremy, so well known from its connection with the fortunes of the Maid of Orleans, was a beech-tree of such magnificence and antiquity, that the superstitions concerning it might perhaps be traditions of the Druidic ages of Gaul. It was said to be haunted by a malignant kind of spirits, whom the fear, rather than the civility, of the country people designated as the Dark or Fatal Ladies. *L'arbre charmine faée* was its title far and near; but the qualities and offices assigned to the fairies of Domremy were rather those of witches and sorceresses than of the cheerful little sprites

known in England by the name. Their chief business and delight were said to consist in luring mankind under the dreadful dominion to which they were themselves subjected; and they were supposed to achieve this object by the most splendid temptations, including that of their own personal beauty, described as unrivalled by those affrighted wanderers who had chanced to come upon them in their midnight orgies.

This legend was possibly a reminiscence of the ancient woodland mythology concerning the nymphs that dwelt in trees; or, more probably, of the Druidic ceremonials, and of the arts and allurements practised by the Celtic priestesses to lure back Christian converts to paganism. But it is certain that the lords of Domremy annually celebrated rites resembling those with which of old the sylvan divinities were propitiated, around the tree and fountain. It was usual with them and the whole district of their vassalage to assemble on the first day of May on the enchanted spot, to spend it in feasts, dancing, singing, and other rejoicings, beneath the broad shadow of the beech-tree, which usually at that season formed a dome of snowy blossom and verdure. When this was not the case, it boded ill luck to the neighbourhood during the year. The fountain was propitiated by a present of little loaves, carefully baked for the occasion, of the finest wheat, which, after being well soaked, were divided among the company in honour of the waters. It was believed that the founder of the Domremy family, extinct at the period of our chronicle, had made a compact with the Fatal Ladies, which obliged them to observe this ceremonial under pain of forfeiture of their possessions. Accordingly, the first who failed in it was the last of his line; and nearly thirty years had elapsed since the last Lord of Domremy finished a life of rebellion, sacrilege, and crime of various sorts, in compelled banishment from his native land. The peasantry nevertheless preserved in ruder guise the custom of their fathers, and thus perpetuated the renown of the Fairy Tree and Fountain of Domremy.

But it was not on account of these dreary legends only that Durand Laxart was filled with dismay, when he found whither they had strayed. There it was that his niece first beheld the apparitions whose voices urged her forth on the marvellous enterprise she announced: whom she herself indeed declared to be saints of paradise, but who, considering the locality, might reasonably be dreaded as denizens of another realm. Nor was the feeling much diminished when Durand remarked the expression of profound and troubled thought in the countenance of his erratic kinswoman, as she paused and gazed around. It was now the hour of sunset, and in his apprehension there was something fiendish and unearthly in the red glow that overspread the landscape, the windings of the river, and the rocks, giving to the fantastic roots clinging over them the aspect of twining serpents of fire.

"What do we here, child? It will be dark-night presently, and this is no place to meet it in," said Durand, tremulously.

"My heart is something chilled by yonder grey-bearded man's despisal of my words. I would behold again the very spot where I

heard the sweet voices, and saw the radiant forms, that I may believe again!" replied Jeanne, and looking thoughtfully upward among the lofty wide-spreading branches, clothed with the earliest green of spring, she added, "The blossoms are plentiful this year; when they spread, the tree will seem one mound of lilies! and by that time the lilies of France must bloom again, or fade for ever!"

"Be not tempted by fair promises, my child; the Dark Ladies keep them only for show's sake, awhile!—that I should speak such a word here!" said Durand, crossing himself with visible terror.

"Our Lady will protect thee; look, yonder is her chapel and hermitage,—fear nothing!" said Jeanne, pointing on high to a little building, to which was attached a cell, hewn in the rock, known far and near as the hermitage of St. Mary of Domremy. Durand was somewhat comforted by observing its white cross, and the image of the Virgin peering from among the alders and brambles that clustered up the steep. But a new alarm suddenly occurred to him. It was true that this hermitage was venerated throughout the country for the sanctity of the solitaries who, from time to time, and for ages, had tenanted it. But its last possessor was a strange and half-savage ascetic, who left at his demise no very favourable impressions among the inhabitants of the neighbouring districts. It was even asserted by some old folks, in whispers, that he was identical with that very Lord of Domremy, whose manifold crimes brought down so heavy a vengeance on his head, and who, after forty years of exile and wandering, returned to finish his career, it was believed, in penance and prayer, amid the scenes where his deepest villanies had been perpetrated. Durand remembered, that in favour of his niece only did this terrible ascetic relax the severity of the solitude and silence to which he had apparently condemned himself. He took delight in relating to the child tales of warfare and battle in distant and strange lands of the East, where it seemed he had spent many years in combating the infidels,— probably pleased with the eager innocence of the attention she lent. Perhaps he was a little mad; for what else could have made a worn-out fanatic soldier of the sepulchre take delight in teaching a female child the ordonnance of battles, the names and uses of warlike engines, the subtle stratagems of the bloody strifes in which he had spent nearly twice the average life of man?

With these ideas in his mind, uncle Durand was disagreeably startled when, raising his eyes to the chapel, he saw, or thought he saw, a dark figure, resembling that of the departed eremite, bending over a rock, and gazing most attentively down upon them from a cowl drawn over its visage. It vanished instantaneously, like a shadow glancing away from light; but the apparition, real or imagined, produced so unpleasant an effect upon Durand, that he turned to entreat his niece to proceed on their journey. To his surprise, he perceived that she was kneeling, and with clasped hands seemed absorbed in prayer, while tears streamed unheeded down her cheeks.

Durand gazed tremulously round, not daring to interrupt this act of devotion, but with some inward doubt as to what description of

power it might be addressed. His kinswoman might have read the the dark pages of her destiny in his troubled and dubious face, had she not been too thoroughly absorbed in the solemn and mournful thoughts that crowded upon her and filled her soul, while engaged in a silently-passionate appeal to Heaven for guidance. But Durand was suddenly startled out of his devotional propriety. "What sounds are these? Let us begone!" he exclaimed—"Let us begone, Jeanne—there is nothing good to be worshipped here—it is no hallowed place; and, hark! what sounds are these?"

This exclamation was occasioned by remote sounds resembling the blasts of horns and the halloos of a chase, echoed with ghostly faintness among the surrounding hills; at least they might have struck Durand in that light at any other time and place, especially if the cries of the distant hunters had been in a language which he understood. But such they were not, and he gazed in mute terror at his kinswoman, almost expecting that the Prince of Darkness, with his terrific retinue, was about to rush around and sweep himself and her bodily away.

"What ails thee, uncle? These are sounds of an approaching chase," said Jeanne, rising slowly and calmly.

"Ay, but of what manner of hunters!" said Durand, with chattering teeth. "Thou knowest this tree is haunted by fairies and demons. Give me thine hand; let us struggle with the fiend, and away, if God gives us grace ever to see Domremy again."

"It is false! this tree is haunted only by the saints, and white-robed companies of holiest martyrs," returned Jeanne, vehemently. "It was on this very sward, beneath these very branches, that St. Catherine and St. Margaret appeared to me in my childhood, with the wreaths of their martyrdom round their fair pale brows, bright as leaves of light; and the Virgin Mother herself descended among silvery clouds to show me her lovely rose-coloured babe asleep in her arms, smiling sadly on me, as if she predicted for me, too, a glorious but a woful fate!"

"Sounds of a chase! oh, no, no! I never heard such cries before," faltered Durand.

"'Tis true! they are English cries—it is English breath that pollutes the air!" exclaimed Jeanne, snuffing the wind pantingly like an animal of a fine sense, that discerns some evil odour.

"Ay, indeed, there are English as near as Commercy!" said Durand, delightedly casting off his worse suspicions. "And now let us begone, with still more occasion, for the quarry is coming down the wind, and I would not cross scent before the English hounds for all the ships of Messire Jacques, the Argentier."

"Yonder it comes! look! look—a noble stag, like France herself, even at the latest gasp, yet will not turn at bay!" exclaimed Jeanne, as clearing some scattered hillocks with spent and feeble bounds a noble animal of the species indicated appeared, directing its flight towards the rocks beneath which they stood.

CHAPTER III.

DOMREMY.

"My sword, my spear, my shaggy shield,
With these I plough, with these I sow,
With these I reap my harvest field,
The only good the gods bestow.
My sword, my spear, my shaggy shield,
These make me lord of all below,
For those who fear my sword and spear,
Before my shaggy shield must bow."—*Anthology.*

"It is ready to fall; look at its lolling tongue and its black nose! The hounds will be upon it in an instant. Let us fly, Jeannette, or it will rend us as it passes," shouted Durand, taking his own advice with such approbation that he was at a considerable distance before he found he was running alone. Turning in great alarm to ascertain what had become of his kinswoman, he perceived that she had not stirred from beneath the fairy tree. The stag was approaching her in heavy tottering bounds, as if making the last efforts of its strength; and Durand expected nothing less than to see it tear a way past Jeanne with its mighty antlers. But if such was the fugitive's intent, it was too much spent to accomplish it; and a bound, which Durand expected to produce this catastrophe, stretched the stag powerless on the grass almost at her feet.

Aware of his niece's danger, of which she seemed unconscious, if the stag arose at bay, Durand rushed back to drag her from its track. But when he reached the spot, he perceived, with equal terror and amazement, that she was kneeling beside the fallen prey, and stroking the sweat from its foamy flanks! He saw, however, that it was exhausted, and incapable of immediate mischief. It was a hart of the largest kind, and its huge branchy head lay powerlessly on the grass, which its steaming nostrils covered with froth; its large eyes glared fixed and glassy, and but for the universal palpitation of the stately carcass, it might have been thought that its sufferings were over.

Durand's attempts to make his kinswoman sensible of her danger were lost in the shouts of the approaching hunters, and the clamour of the hounds that came dashing pell-mell over the irregular ground intervening, to their prey. The pack was headed by three staghounds, of extraordinary size and beauty, but evidently almost as much exhausted as the object of pursuit. Yet, spent as they were, they rushed in upon the fallen quarry, heedless of the distant shout of "Ware haunch! ware haunch!" and one had seized the deer by the throat, when, to the indescribable terror of Durand, Jeanne transfixed it with her wolfspike, and beat the others off, with the merciless resolution of a practised huntsman. Not ignorant that they were violating the laws of the chase, the fierce pursuers fell

howling back, and at the same instant their lawful corrector appeared in the person of a stout English yeoman, in the green habit of a forester, with a long-shaft bow in his hand, and a broad hunting-knife at his girdle.

"Thanks, my bonny buxom! Holy Bones, but they have their meed!" he shouted. "Now, stand off the quarry, that I may run in and cut its throat. It is a rare wily one, and may do hurt else. Stand off, I say!"

"Wulfstan, the wench understands not thy English prate!" said a second hunter who arrived on a panting steed, adding in French, in the tone of one accustomed to be obeyed, "Stand off, lest the beast fray thee with his antlers, while we reward the hounds. Blood them, Wulfstan, and I will wind the mort the while."

And raising a silver horn which hung at his girdle, the hunter blew the wavering protracted note that announces the death of the stag. But he broke off in amazement when the forester, who eagerly prepared to execute his lord's command, by tucking up his sleeve and drawing his knife, was suddenly thrust back against his steed.

"Away! Ye shall not rend this noble prey, false Englishman!" said Jeanne, pushing her staff with violence against the forester. And seldom had his round red face and keen gray Saxon eyes expressed any mental emotion so strongly as the wonder with which the forester now stared at her countenance, gleaming with passion. His superior also gazed at her with astonishment, and with a sudden vividness of interest but rarely visible on his handsome but severe and saturnine features.

"And she has killed the hound! She has killed the best hound of the whole pack!" said Wulfstan, breathlessly. "She has spiked Bran as dead as a toad in a harrow!"

"Noble master, pardon her, for she is mad, and always dipping her fingers in hot broth," interposed Durand.

"Thou liest, Durand Laxart! She is no more mad than any other pestilent brache of thy faction!" yelled a voice from a throng of huntsmen and prickers, who, following some personage of high dignity, in an ecclesiastical garb, came flooding in full tide round the prey.

"Who says this marvellous girl is not mad, for surely she seems so, or inspired by some nobler and fiercer spirit than ever I thought was in woman?" said the hunter who had blown the mort, continuing to gaze with deep attention and curiosity at Durand's kinswoman.

He was evidently of the first rank in the company. In person, lofty, muscular, and very powerfully knit; in the full vigour of manhood, or perhaps a little past, for the deep lines of thought and deliberation in his countenance, which was naturally of a melancholy and austere character, though handsome and well carved in all its lineaments, gave him an expression of sternness and reflection somewhat more mature. He wore the habit of the Knights of the Garter in time of peace, being a superb mantle of violet-blue velvet, embroidered with innumerable gold garters, a large hood of crimson

velvet on the right shoulder, and on the left the royal badge of England. A light cuirass and head-piece of steel marked some misgiving as to the safety of his sport in this newly-seized country, while his very presence on it indicated a nearly equal degree of contempt for the danger. The rest of his garb was sombre but rich, indicative doubtless of the taste of the owner, and marked with rather a singular profusion, in a military man, of religious emblems and devices. From these circumstances the alarming conviction struck Durand dumb, that he beheld the dreaded conqueror of Rouvrai and invader of Commercy, Sir John Fastolfe, himself, in person!

"I say she is not mad, my lord, any more than a rank partisan of the Dauphin must needs be!" said Durand's contradictor. "Mine host of the Lily, thou canst not deny that when I was lately on business of my lord the bishop, in Neuchâteau, she nigh raised the town to stone me!"

"Worthy messire, it was thought you came as a spy, and you refused to pay your reckoning, and nigh murdered me for asking it!" said Durand, timorously.

"And spy I was—I shame not to own it—my name is Franquet d'Arras!" replied the hunter, ferociously. "Ho, ho, I promised thee I would finely avenge me some day, and the day has come!"

"My lord of Beauvais," said Fastolfe, turning to the ecclesiastical Nimrod, who, like his predecessor in Chaucer, seemed to take but little heed of the text which says that "hunters ben not holy men," "I did never think till now that fiercenesss could become a woman; yet look at this noble creature, and tell me doth it beseem her worse than his mettled bravery the good steed, or his wild, free glance of fire the soaring hawk?"

The personage thus appealed to was the ecclesiastical dignitary above mentioned, whose natural characteristics, even more than his professional ones, seemed to render his presence on such an occasion unsuitable. His figure was tall and stately, but very meagre; and his countenance—but for the unctuous sparkle in the eye—might have passed for that of some laborious scholar,—sallow with years of studious toil. He was evidently past the meridian of life by a considerable period; but there was a satirical vivacity and malignant liveliness in his expression that strangely illumined the darkness of the features on which it played. His attire was rather that of some great secular prince than of the office he filled, being chiefly marked as ecclesiastical by the clerical tippet of ermine, and three-cornered cap of velvet ornamented with a diamond cross.

"An excellently handsome and massive wench! Good troth, we have at last lighted on one to thy mind, fellow-soldier, since thou must tame her ere thou canst make love to her!" returned the prelate, jovially, but with a degree of veiled meaning that seemed not altogether to please Sir John.

"Ye are but insolent vassals, to my thought, nevertheless," he said, sternly, yet his eye brightened with admiration and a kind of joyful fierceness when he marked the unquailing defiance in Jeanne's look and attitude. "Or are ye ignorant to whom the purlieus of the

forest of Commercy belong, that ye dare to beat my hounds from their prey?"

"My lord, we know not, or may my next cup of muscatel choke me!" said Durand.

"What do these strange hounds here, rending a hart in a forest of the king of France?" returned Jeanne, raising her flashing eyes.

"Wouldst thou rather they should rend a doe, which I promise thee, maiden, they would not long delay at my command?" said the Dragon Knight, with a slight flush suffusing his saturnine complexion. "But thou art too goodly a quarry for a hound to mangle, and I the rather forgive thy bold speech that, as I have not long taken possession, perchance ye have not heard that the king of France, and of England to boot, has conferred on me this whole district, with all its castles, villages, bailiwicks, warrens, and forests, in full sovereignty, with judgment of life and death, without appeal?"

"On quittance of three salted herrings, wherewith, fair son, you are to feast his highness whenever he visits you," said the prelate, gravely.

"You speak falsely, sir Englishman!—there is no king of France, nor can be till the Dauphin Charles is crowned in Rheims!" returned the peasant girl.

"Ha! say you so! By St. George, but I will let all men know who is lord in these lands meanwhile!" said the knight, smiling at the audacity of the reply. "Yeoman, fasten this chain of gold round the stag's antlers, and let it be proclaimed, the lord of Commercy has sworn, that whoever, freeman or serf, noble or peasant, shall dare to sever its links, or loosen hound or bolt to molest the hart which this brave damsel has saved, in all its range, shall hang on the top of this beech-tree till he rots to the roots, as surely as yonder setting sun rises on the day! It shall be my care to let men know who that same lord may be, should need arise."

"The day and the hour are yours, but the hour and the day of France are at hand!" returned Jeanne, with an inspired and prophetic fervour that struck the whole audience with a vague sentiment of awe and surprise. Wulfstan, who was joyfully preparing to obey his lord's command, paused, dangling the chain, which the latter unfastened from his neck, in visible amazement.

"Why, how now, Sir John! It is dangerous when peasants and serfs rave thus!" said the ecclesiastical noble, knitting his furrowed brows. "The bloody days of the Jacquerie and Clubbists are not so far gone but that they may return. This insolence deserves some chastisement."

"My lord, give me leave, and I will chop her into hound's meat!" said the ferocious captain of the skinners, raising an axe which hung chained at his saddle-bow.

"Look first to thine own bones, which I will break into more pieces than ever I did beef marrows for a kennel, if thou lift hand against her!" shouted Wulfstan, throwing himself between the threatener and the object menaced.

"On your life, touch her not!" said Fastolfe, with the calm imperi-

ousness of one accustomed to be obeyed. Will the hart ever run again, Wulfstan?"

"If he is allowed breathing-time to regain his wind, and the evening dews to freshen his gall," replied the experienced forester, after a grave survey of the stag. "Poor Bran! thou didst not think to be stiff ere thy quarry."

"Then will the lord of Commercy make this stag sacred with his own hand," said Fastolfe, vaulting lightly from his saddle; and taking the golden links from his yeoman, he knelt and twisted them tightly round the antlers of the hart. The creature moaned and struggled faintly, while Jeanne watched the operation with a stern, and it almost seemed regretful, expression. "I would rather that aught dear to me were slain than fondled by English hands!" she murmured. "Yet this creature was one, whose dam being slain by stalkers, I nourished even from a helpless fawn to what we behold. No marvel it sought the shadow of this tree as a place of refuge, where so often it had eaten the sweet beechmast and drunk of these sweeter waters. Still would I rather it perished than were thus spared."

"Good brother," said the bishop, who watched Fastolfe's movements with surprise, "do as you will in the assertion of your rights in this forest; but so rebellious a vassal should be looked to in another way. Franquet, bring her along with us to Commercy, to be questioned at more leisure, or let your verdurer be her jailer, Sir John."

"Ay, Wulfstan! this should be looked to—bring her along with us," said Fastolfe, but with visible hesitation, and even confusion. "She mutters dangerously, it cannot be denied—but for the hart, henceforth it is as free as the royallest ever hunted in France, were it by Charlemagne himself."

"Now is thy poor father's dream come to pass, and now art thou led away by men-at-arms to some doom of shame and horror!" exclaimed Durand.

"No, Durand, not beneath this tree—I fear nothing here!" said Jeanne, with perfect composure. "Bid your hounds rend me, or your archers pierce me with their shafts, and learn what power ye have over those who guard me, Englishman!"

"This is the fairy tree of Domremy; do not strive to hurt her; the Dark Ladies love and cherish her!" ejaculated Durand Laxart.

"Then she is a witch!" yelled Franquet d'Arras. "Cross of God, slay her! What, ho! comrade, slip the hounds upon her." And his uproarious cries and gestures suddenly roused the whole pack, barking and howling, as if to renew the assault. At this moment, a lady, mounted on a weary steed, and attended by all the laggards of the chase, men and dogs, came slowly riding up.

"Yonder comes the Lady Melusine; make your new prisoner while I explain the hubbub to her," said the ecclesiastic, smiling tartly at the alarm and indecision visible in Fastolfe's countenance; then spurring his jennet into a gallant curvet, he hastened to meet the approaching huntress.

"Close in and seize her, but keep the hounds off. What is this

talk about fairies and witchcraft?" said Fastolfe, with increased emotion. Franquet instantly spurred his horse on with a ferocious cry, resembling that of a wild beast when it springs on its prey; but the onset was suddenly arrested. Roused by the hallooings, and revived from its exhaustion, the stag suddenly hurtled itself up, and turned at bay with such fury, that the whole concourse, aware of the formidable nature of such an attack, rolled back in dismay; but Franquet was too far advanced to follow the example, and though he checked his horse until it stood nearly upright on its haunches, the stag rushed beneath the belly and tore it open, so that horse and rider fell over each other to the earth. The next instant and the hart had overleaped both, and, speeding on with the velocity of thought, gained the outward ring of its encirclers. Every eye followed the flight of the dangerous fugitive, and instantaneously all became aware that its career would lead it directly against the bishop of Beauvais and the lady he had gone to meet. They were seen advancing at an ambling pace, engaged in conversation.

No aid, it was evident, could possibly arrive in time, though Fastolfe sprang on his horse and put it to its wildest speed. But the cries of warning and terror reached the ears of the approaching pair, and for a moment it was scarcely doubted by any one, that the prelate would seek safety in flight and leave the lady to shift for her own. The next, and they beheld him, with great courage and gallantry, tear her from the saddle, and throwing himself from his jennet beneath her, receive all the shock of a fall, which he achieved just in time to avoid the rending rush of the stag, among a heap of furze and stones; both their horses were severely torn by the antlers of the fugitive as it passed between them.

These events happened in the whirl of a moment, but Durand Laxart could scarcely be said to have returned to his senses several minutes after, when he found himself dragged on amidst a crowd of hunters with Jeanne by his side, of whom he unconsciously kept a strong grasp by the wrist. Loading them with revilings and dreadful threats of the vengeance he would exact, came Franquet d'Arras, covered with bruises and gore. It required all Wulfstan's resolute exertions, and even a display of his hunting-knife, to prevent the captain of the skinners from laying violent hands on the innocent cause of his disaster. In this manner they were taken as prisoners to the spot where Fastolfe and the bishop of Beauvais were anxiously engaged in reviving the young huntress, who had fainted away.

Amidst all the confusion of his ideas, Durand could not but remark the beauty of the lady and the magnificence of her hunting-dress, while, at the same time, he recognized her as the dispossessed heiress of Commercy. She had doubtless been permitted, as a relaxation from the irksomeness of imprisonment, to accompany her capturers on this unlucky chase. Durand was also struck with two observations he made, to which after-circumstances added force. The bishop of Beauvais seemed to take a more than pastoral interest in the rescued lamb, while, on the contrary, there was something of constraint and coldness even in the necessary attentions which Fastolfe paid to her.

Yet she appeared exuberantly grateful and pleased with the latter, the moment she revived and opened her fine sparkling eyes, according to the disinterested judgment of Durand, for she was thanking the knight, instead of the prelate, for her deliverance, as if he had achieved it.

"Nay, noble lady, the thanks that are due should be given to my lord bishop," said Fastolfe; "my will was good, but his deed was better."

"You can at least avenge our beauteous captive, whose dear and precious life was placed in such jeopardy, on the insolent vassal who caused all," said the prelate, vehemently. "I speak not of mine own severe bruises and injuries, nor of my captain's, who has lost his best steed; but methinks a longer sojourn than you at first intended her in your dungeons of Commercy is due to this audacious wench! What say you, lady? This is the bold peasant whose insolence excited Sir John's admiration instead of wrath, for he delights in contradictions."

A sudden colour visited the rich brunette complexion of the Lady Melusine, and she looked with a very visible expression of distaste and anxiety at the young girl now brought before her.

"I am but little hurt, my reverend lord," she said, after a very brief but very dissatisfied survey. "I owe my life to you, and grieve more over your hurts than mine own. But holy men at least preach charity; and Sir John is known to be as pious as he is valiant. If my preserval be of any pleasure to either of ye, my kind lords, I beseech you, let us pardon this peasant woman, and let her go in peace."

"Ay, it is best, it is right; let her go in peace," said Fastolfe.

"Maiden, my lord grants me your release; and as I am myself but his poor prisoner, lest he revoke his grace, depart at once," said the fair huntress, rising impatiently, as she marked the prolonged thoughtful gaze of the knight at the prisoner.

Franquet d'Arras began muttering some menacing observation, when his ecclesiastical lord cut him imperiously short.

"This lady's word, though a prisoner, is law to us all," he exclaimed. "Depart then, vassals, and let your village know that it has a kind and forgiving lord. What call you your herding-place, fellow, for we must know where to find this fierce she-rebel, in case she learns not to put a bridle on her tongue?"

"Domremy, my gracious lord; but it is a dependence on the king only, since the forfeiture of the bad lord," said Durand, making an obeisance to his girdle. And with his natural shrewdness he took the lady's impatient signal, seized Jeanne by the arm, and hurried her away from the scene. She withdrew without any of those profound signs of respect usually rendered by persons of low rank to their superiors, followed by the astonished gaze of the spectators as far as they could see her.

It was barely nightfall when, after these occurrences, Durand and his fated kinswoman entered Domremy, but its simple-mannered inhabitants had nearly all retired to rest. Scarcely a sound was

audible save the plaintive wailing of the flocks from the interior of some of the dwellings of the scattered hamlet, where they were probably gathered for security. The poplars skirting the village green, waved with a few faint touches of brightness in the direction of the sunset, and the peaceful little church, embosomed among its yews and graves, caught the last radiance on its glittering weather-cock.

The countenance of Jeanne partook of the glooming hues around her, as she re-entered on this scene of her early youth, contrasting in its silent tranquillity with every inward thought and impulse of the strange and stormy destiny, whose workings were in her soul like the throes of some unknown and terrific birth. The light of vehement feeling faded from her countenance, and courageous as she had shown herself in the presence of danger, something even of fear seemed to grow upon her as she approached her father's house, and the beatings of her heart were almost audible as she halted on its threshold.

The father of Durand's niece was called Jacob d'Arc, and his dwelling was such as suited his condition—a species of enfranchised serfdom. The land he cultivated belonged to him under arbitrary conditions of rent and quittance, which varied according to the caprices of the royal bailiff for the time being—but he also belonged to his land. Neither could part with the other; but under so distant and ill-managed a seignory as that of the crown of France, and with his own habits of industry and parsimony, Jacob d'Arc had managed to become what was considered wealthy in that remote and pastoral district. His house was one of the largest in the village—a long straggling building, patched with rushes, chiefly walled with unhewn timber and small pebblestones, in which were certain narrow interstices to admit the light and air, without either glass or lattice to exclude their sometimes stormy accompaniments. The times were not such as to confide in the usual careless security of a latch, which Durand discovered when he raised that of Jacob d'Arc, and found that two massive bars forbade the usual facile entrance. A deafening clamour of dogs within, which instantly arose, so effectually served the purposes of a knocker, that Durand could scarcely make his name and purpose known, in answer to a gruff inquiry audible amidst the din. But as soon as the door was opened, Jeanne d'Arc was overwhelmed by the joyful greetings of three powerful shepherd dogs, of a shaggy wolf-like species, which recognized her instantly, and welcomed her with the wildest demonstrations of remembrance and affection.

A gloomy interior was visible by the smoking pinewood torch, which the serf who admitted them raised: an apartment equal in extent to the whole dwelling, but not so high. A rude ceiling, or rather cross-bars of oak, separated it from the loft in which the whole family reposed, in a barbarous state of innocence and equality. A low fire of peat and fir burned in a deep black recess, a round hole in the roof above which was the sole chimney. Before this sat the severe master of the family in solitary state, no one presuming to approach within the most respectful distance, not even his wife, who,

tanned with years and toil, was silently spinning by the last dull light that entered at one of the crevices in the wall. Jacob d'Arc was engaged, when our travellers arrived, in the favourite occupation of his leisure moments, telling his beads before a blackened image of the Virgin rudely carved in the crossbeam over the hearth. The old man was of a stern, gloomy, and care-wrinkled physiognomy, and wore a garb which chiefly consisted of the undressed hide of a bullock. In the corner beside his seat was a sharp bright wolf-spike, over which hung a rusty steel jacket and cap, long disused, but kept in readiness, in compliance with the terms of his tenure.

Isabelle Romée, the mother of Jeanne d'Arc, or 'Zabel, as she was elliptically called in the country dialect, was an old woman of a patient, grave, and, withal, benevolent character of countenance. There was little else remarkable in her appearance, excepting that she was rather short and stout, and had transmitted these qualities to her daughter Margot, Jeanne's elder and only sister. The latter formed an almost complete contrast in other respects to her marvellous relative. Nothing could well exceed the homely and placid cast of her features and general demeanour, as she stood engaged in squeezing the curds for a cheese, looking round to see who might enter, but evidently with very little interest to spare from her occupation. Jeanne's two brothers, both older than herself, were also present. The elder, Jean, a powerful but commonplace-looking peasant, was anxiously absorbed in sharpening the coulter of a plough, assisted by an aged serf, who turned the stone with an appearance of idiotic apathy. The younger, Pierre, a youth evidently of livelier parts, was busied in mending the strings of some nets on the floor.

The master of the house looked up with a startled expression as Durand crossed the threshold, and it was doubtful whether disquiet or relief predominated when he beheld his youngest child following in the wake.

"Yes, here we are, Master Jacob! Heaven be praised for all miracles! I have brought you your daughter home in safety and good health," said Durand, striving to act as if he thought they should be welcome. "Mother d'Arc, you did not expect to see her again so soon; but indeed my wife and she could not agree, for new wine yeasts in old casks, and I thought she would be useful to you, as the lambs will soon be weaned and want pasturage."

"Give me your blessing, father; I have need of it," said Jeanne, in a deep, agitated voice, as she knelt before the stern old carle, on the bare earthen floor.

"Not till I know wherefore my sister sends you back to us, like a maggoty fleece!" he replied, with angry peevishness. "Thy foolish mother is ready with her arms—go to them! she was ever thy fosterer in disobedience."

"Nay, Jacob, I did never side with her but when thou wert so harsh that a silly ewe would have turned on one that maltreated her yeanling so," said the old woman, meekly. "Jeanne, my child, thou art welcome, if thou hast any good reason for leaving thy good

aunt, La Rousse, and the pretty town of Neuchâteau, where it is always as gay as a fair."

"Why, dame, it has been a place of such resort of late for men-at-arms, that, knowing her father's fears, I thought it best to bring her home awhile," interposed Durand. "Moreover, she likes none of our city ways, and I find 'tis a lost labour to try and tame a falcon into a barn-door fowl!"

"Ay! she still longs to break her father's heart, and become the trull of a camp!" exclaimed Jacob, passionately. "And you have brought her home in as good time as may be for the purpose, since the English at Commercy override the whole country, and have picked up some score of our girls already, willing or unwilling, and Jeanne will take herself to the market!"

"Nay, brother, the English have no lure that can win your bird to their mew," said Durand. "She hates them worse than I do sour wine; nay, it is partly because, as thou knowest, she is possessed with the fancy that is she to drive them out of France, that I brought her home, calling as we came in Vaucouleurs, to ask the governor to send her to my lord, the Dauphin, on that errand."

"Brother Durand! art thou too gone mad?" returned Jacob d'Arc, rising in great agitation. "My dismal dream has then come to pass, and she is on the way to perdition and ruin! In evil hour wert thou born, Jeanne, and would to God and our Lady that I could root thee from my heart, and bid thee go wherever the evil winds of thy purposes may bear thee!"

Durand hastened to dispel this apprehension, by cheerfully assuring his brother-in-law that they had been driven from the presence of the governor of Vaucouleurs with a contempt and menaces which would effectually prevent any return. And to counteract his fears on the score of the English neighbourhood, he described the recent affair of the stag in a manner that changed the complexion of the old man's terrors to no great advantage.

"Oh blessed Dom Remy! she will never rest content till she has brought the English to destroy thy hermitage and our poor village!" he exclaimed, striking the ground repeatedly with his staff. "And did the stag fall beneath the Fairy Tree, and stand there at bay?" he continued, a shadow of superstitious gloom stealing over his angry looks. "Ay! but remember, Jeanne, those whom the Dark Ladies tempt only flourish awhile; the day of reckoning comes at last, and they perish miserably and in despair!"

"What sayst thou, Jacob d'Arc?" said the old woman with unwonted energy. "Dost thou pretend that the child of my breast is a daughter of the devil, an associate of the evil spirits of the tree?"

"What know I, or any of us? Hath it not even been said that she is a changeling of theirs—for in what doth she resemble the rest of us?" returned Jacob d'Arc. "Have I not had fearful warning dreams sent me by our blessed Mother concerning her, and especially last night, when, it seems, she was projecting her journey to Vaucouleurs?"

"It was a fearful dream, indeed!—thy shuddering and cries awoke

me, too, husband!" said Isabelle Romée, with a strange glance at her child, in which maternal tenderness and a vague sentiment of undefined terror and aversion, mingled. "Tell it to her, and perchance it may affright her from doing the wrong that brings such punishment."

"It was thus, Durand," returned the father.—"Methought it was a dark moonlight, such as those whereon she was wont in her childhood to steal forth, as she would say, to watch the clouds whiten when they passed it, and to pray to Him that nailed the heavens above us with stars! I did suspect thee, Jeanne, of some evil purpose, and followed thee to the devilish Beech-tree; and there I saw thee dancing and singing around it as we do on May-day, but all alone, and thy song was wild and wordless as the voice of a stormy wind in the forest. And anon thou didst pause and stealthily gaze around, as one that fears surprisal, and then thou didst kneel, and dig and root with thy nails in the rank turf beneath the tree; and I heard the hideous shriek that maddens the cattle, when thou didst tear up the accursed mandragora, shaped like some foul abortion of our kind! Methought I saw thee wave it over thy head in triumph, and it changed into the royal banner of the Oriflamme, and a wilderness of fiends and sorceressess came rushing around thee, borne on the whirling winds of the night! Dost thou not shudder? Ay, and they knelt around thee as to their queen and mistress, and a youthful fiend, with a face of glowing charcoal, that yet resembled the Dauphin's on the coin thou wearest in thine amulet, and who bore a crown of blazing daggers, held forth his hand to raise thee in his arms as his lady and paramour! Then, when I rushed forward to save thee, shrieking our Lady's name, methought all vanished, and left thee in mine embrace—weeping such burning tears that they fell upon my cheeks like molten lead! But when I groaned, and thy mother awakened me, they were mine own."

"See, Jacob, she weeps too," said the mother, whose tears flowed down her wrinkled visage during this recital. "She was ever obedient and good! She will take our piteous Lady's warning, and never grieve us any more."

"What dost thou say, Jeanne?" resumed Jacob. "I have too long listened to thy mother's foolish bleating, but art thou not now satisfied, thou art a fool and a madwoman, since the Lord de Baudricourt told thee so?"

"But did she really speak face to face with the knight?" said Margot, for the first time relinquishing her occupation of squeezing the curds. "I have seen him sometimes when I take the eggs and butter, crossing the market-place, in armour as bright as silver, but I never dared to raise mine eyes above his golden belt."

"I wish I had a golden belt and feathers and bright armour!" exclaimed Pierre d'Arc. "How the girls would stare at me and admire me as I went along, jingling my spurs."

"Thou art another fool of her sort, Pierre!" said the elder brother, Jean; "but methinks, father, we should rather take her to the priest, and have her conscience well sifted, if the fairies have really been at

their temptings with her! Why does she not answer now, instead of gazing at us all with such large unmeaning eyes?"

"It is often thus with her of late," said Durand, apologetically. "These daylight dreams come over her like clouds in a fair sky, when a body least expects it! Let me speak to her, and remonstrate! My dear child, hast thou any objection—purely to oblige thy father and me—to go to confession and absolution in a Christian manner, in celebration of thy return?"

"Our curate is a Burgundian, and a favourer of the English," replied Jeanne. "To him my thoughts and purposes are indeed madness—senseless as the babble of brooks in ears that note not their melody. Yet even he could believe when my visions were only of the saints and angels in their glory!"

"Truly, Jeanne, I have a trick for thy trick!" returned Jacob, vehemently. "There is a wandering friar lately come among us, doubtless of much sanctity, since he talks of remaining at the hermitage of St. Mary, to serve the chapel, and he seems no friend of the English, as far as he dares say so. Wilt thou go to him?"

"Verily, yes, for my soul yearns for some anchorage in its troubled thoughts!" said Jeanne, with sudden eagerness and interest. "Lead me to him."

"We will bide the morn, or our presence may trouble him, for he seems fearful of some danger," said Jacob, greatly mollified by this concession. "And if he be a true servant of God, he will convince thee that thou shouldst obey thy father before all things."

"But the will of God!" said Jeanne, in a firm yet melancholy tone. "I will fast to-night to prepare me for confession. But let me rest awhile; my soul is shaken and trembles like the sun in a broken stream. Mother, I would rest—perchance I shall not often rest again!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE INSPIRATION OF JEANNE D'ARC

"These signs have marked me extraordinary
And all the courses of my life do show
I am not in the roll of common men."—*Shakspeare.*

THE return of Jeanne d'Arc to her native village excited more notice than an event so natural and apparently without consequence seemed likely to produce. From her childhood, she had been an object of that indolent wonder or vague mistrust with which the vulgar usually observe the first inkling of the extraordinary, whether in human genius or in merely visual phenomena. The nature of the possession that held her was yet of a kind to excite the curiosity and credulity of a profoundly ignorant and superstitious age, but another motive contributed to swell the numbers of the procession that accompanied Jacob d'Arc and his family on their pilgrimage to the chapel of St.

Mary. The mendicant friar who had lodged himself in it, and seemed inclined to undertake the long-disused duties of anchorite in the adjacent hermitage, took such pains in secluding himself from observation, and was apparently of so reserved and ascetic a disposition, that many thought the opportunity a good one to gratify themselves with a personal inspection of his characteristics.

Jeanne acquiesced, not only without reluctance but with satisfaction, in her father's will. The doubts her clear reason could not but suggest to herself when the splendours of her imaginative enthusiasm for a while lost colouring in the cold lights of disappointment, the disbelief of all around her, made her look eagerly in any direction for some anchorage for her tossing soul. From what she had heard of the mendicant friar she had formed hopes of sympathy, a need for which haunts even the broadest-winged spirit in its loftiest soar, while every stroke of its wings leaves it farther below. Her habitual veneration and submission to religion gave to its meanest ministers something of the glory and radiance communicated by the stained windows in a Gothic cathedral to the rudest and most grotesque carvings of saint or martyr, and disposed her to trust in the efficacy of an appeal to any representative of the church, however humble.

Jacob led the way, followed by his sons, who carried each a sack of meal as a propitiation to the new inmate of St. Mary's. Durand followed with a bevy of the village girls, all bringing some little presents, either of flowers or tapers, to offer to the Virgin of the chapel, and whom he enlivened with jests and pranks more remarkable for vivacity than propriety, Jeanne herself, serious and silent, followed with her sister, and her mother brought up the rear with a suitable attendance of her gossips, and a basket filled with dairy-dainties, filched, with some remorse of conscience, from the dues of her own spiritual director, the curate of Domremy.

The hermitage was soon reached by a track that wound among the rocks of the Meuse, to one which appeared, from the Fairy Fountain, to be almost directly above it, but was in reality separated by a considerable hollow. This space had been cultivated by former anchorites into a pretty garden, now all gone to waste and ruin, but attesting, in the medical scent of the herbs, the purposes to which they had chiefly dedicated it. The ancient chapel was the first object that appeared to those ascending, with its cross and rudely-sculptured gateway; and then the hermit's cell, hewn in the rock beside it, was visible.

On reaching the platform of the rocks, the procession paused to discover the object of its researches, but without success. The new anchorite was nowhere to be seen, until Durand, boldly advancing, and pushing back the wattled door of the hermitage, objurgated the inmate by the pleasing title of "Blessed father," to make his appearance. Greatly, as it seemed, to his surprise and alarm, the summons compelled the friar into compliance. He was seen to start in the utmost confusion from the couch of rushes usually occupied by the ascetics of St. Mary, and evidently from a sound sleep. His consternation was so excessive on perceiving the numerous assemblage

awaiting him, that Durand could only account for it by supposing he was suffering under the influence of some frightful dream, and applied his first efforts to dissipate any unfavourable impression, by kneeling, and, in the most reverential manner, apologizing for the interruption, and explaining the purpose of their visit. It appeared, from Durand's statement, that this was to request the holy stranger to exorcise a maiden of the village, who was possessed by some demon that would not let her rest.

The instant he recovered from his first shock of surprise, the friar drew his cowl over his face, like one who did not court recognition. But Durand's quick eye had time to note a high visage, the large bald crown of which seemed scarcely to belong to the thin, pointed, narrow chin below; a pair of keen, crafty, black eyes, full of suspicion and uncertainty, and a general expression of craft and discontent spread over the whole countenance, which was, on the whole, far from prepossessing.

"There is not even peace for me in the desert!" the friar muttered, when at length he understood the drift of Durand's harangue. "I am here for prayer and meditation, and not to exorcise demons, least of all out of women who have been possessed by them from all time! Let them exalt the horns of their wickedness, or rather those wherewith they garnish mankind, until they gore the feet of the angels in heaven, and then perchance some fitting notice may be taken of their misdoings, and Adam have his ribs whole again. But come, where is the demoniac? Let us dispatch her, and begone all of ye, for I want not staring eyes turned my way."

The friar, who, by his black habit and rope girdle, was a cordelier —then pettishly snatched up his breviary from the couch, and looking in the direction indicated by Durand, visibly started from the intensity of the gaze fixed upon him by Jeanne d'Arc.

"This is the girl, messire, my daughter, and a bitter herb hath she ever been in my pot!" growled old Jacob.

"Is she mad? If so, take her to some of your village poisoners: have ye none that cure the murrain?" said the cordelier, with great surprise.

"We have brought your reverence two sacks of fine wheat flour, a brawn of wild boar, and three fat pullets—not to mention flowers, and such-like trifles," said Durand, while the whole *cortége* imploringly extended the various articles of propitiation, as they were named.

"A dozen sweet cakes, sixteen eggs, two swans of butter, and a keg of our best wine, blessed sir," subjoined old Isabelle d'Arc.

"Take them to Orleans; they need them more than I do, even in this wild crow's nest," replied the anchorite, but not without a mollified glance over the offerings.

"Good father, I am not mad, unless yourself speak madness now," said Jeanne, with sudden eagerness. "I am commanded by the saints of God to take provision to famished Orleans, and redeem the country and king of France from the power of our English enemies, and therefore only do they call me mad."

"Thou, maiden! thou?" exclaimed the amazed cordelier. "The

ravens of Elijah may feed Orleans, but nothing human.—She is mad indeed."

"Nay, rather I fear she is tempted of evil spirits, holy messire," said Jacob d'Arc, in the harsh tones which only fanaticism can give to a father accusing his child.

"Tell me, messire, may it be, that spirits of evil can assume the forms of holiest angels and saints, in robes of woofy sunshine, and tempt us to damnation with shows of glorious good?" said Jeanne, with an eagerness and sublime integrity of look, that riveted the attention of the cordelier.

"There is nothing more common, my daughter," he said, hesitatingly. "St. Patrick was tempted in the guise of a most beautiful plump young woman, but you may see by her hoofs in the painting at Rheims who she was.—Explain yourselves, sons, for in truth she seems to me as wise and sober in her replies as any of you, though that be saying little."

"Messire, there are some of us who deem she is troubled with no spirit but that of female contradiction," said Durand, when Jacob d'Arc interrupted him with a deep groan.

"Nay, let us show the worst of our disease to the good physician," he exclaimed. "From her earliest childhood she was given to solitude, and what dark companionship she might find in it, Heaven only knows. How often did she wander we knew not whither, and bring back strange flowers gathered on the precipices, to affright us. Did she not ever prefer to drive my flocks into the haunted pastures of the Tree, where no one else wandered by chance without affright and unwillingness?"

"I feared nothing evil, father, and I sought solitude, for there only did the bright apparitions visit me," said Jeanne, gently. "My soul was troubled, and rested nowhere but in silence,—in what might seem to many desolation. The murmur of the fountain was to me a kind of music, and my heart reposed when I saw my sheep feeding tranquilly around me, in the drowsy hush of noonday. They throve, father, in those haunted pastures,—the evil spirits, if any such there were, harmed them not."

"But not thereby was brought on us the reproach of witchcraft; not because our gentle Lady rewarded my constant devotion to her in the fattening of my flocks," returned Jacob d'Arc, "But evil spirits appeared to her, messire, beneath the unholy tree, and made us a mockery and a by-word far and near."

"Nay, my father, call them not evil, for they counselled only good, and were glorified saints and archangels of Paradise," said Jeanne. with warmth.

"She fell asleep, no doubt, at times in the pastures of hot noondays, and, having her head full of sad stories of the martyrs and blessed folk in bliss, had all manner of dreams about them," interposed the judicious Durand.

"Uncle, thou dost belie me now!" said Jeanne d'Arc with a vehemence that almost instantly sunk into tones of submission and doubt. "Or may it be, messire, that dreams can paint themselves before our

unclosed eyes, brighter and more richly coloured than realities! Reverend father, I do behold you now; these rocks—the blue sky above us—this wide plain lost in the mountains that mingle their snows with the clouds. Why, then, with these eyes have I gazed on those glorious shows! Nought was changed around me on the earth, yet the sunset has often rolled open its amber gates, and paradise with all its lakes of pale blue light, the golden mistiness of its far woodlands, its bowers of flowering lustre, its wandering spirit of rapt happiness, was revealed to my gaze! With these ears that hear now mine own words, have I listened to the music of their voices, sweeter than the distant harmony of the chants at vespers. Why, then, speak ye of dreams, unless all that we cannot feel or grasp is such?"

The friar stared with outstretched eyes at this extraordinary demoniac, and then turned amazedly to Jacob d'Arc.

"Messire, these were but the silly visions of a lonely child, until the Fatal Ladies saw how fit she was for their purpose—until an accursed old man came among us from some far country, to be a hermit, or something worse," said Jacob. "Until then, albeit ever a serious and thoughtful child, she could join in sports like another, and did not smile, as it were, for sorrow, like the wintry sun. She would sit mute for hours to hear the ancient women sing doleful ballads of the old time. And when our village was at bitter feud with those of Greu, because they were of the English side, their lord being a Burgundian, she led the children of Domremy in onsets against them, with such fierceness and discretion, that ever they vanquished their enemies. But the evil old man came among us, and thenceforth she loved nothing but darkness and the shadow of the fairy tree. I pray you, messire, why should he pick her out from all us of the countries round—a wild, untaught child—to hold his black gossip withal?"

"He had been a soldier for many a long year; a soldier of the blessed sepulchre; and it amazed him, as he himself did afterwards tell me, to behold a child, a girl, lead stalwart lads, with such ordonnance of war and mimicry of the dread games played over France," said Jeanne, with modesty, but with kindling eye and cheek. "I was engaged in that wild sport that he first beheld me, that day I showed how Azincourt might have been won at the fords of the Somme."

"But, messire, it is all but certain that this old hermit and soldier was the same wicked Lord of Domremy, whose crimes were so black that the clerk who pleaded for him in Paris parliament before the king, was ever after called, 'the Devil's Orator,'" returned Jacob.

"Were it even so, he suffered long, endured fearful penances, and shed nigh to the last drainage of his blood in warfare with the infidel," said Jeanne, with some hesitation. "I say not that it was so, nor know I; but this I know well, that he loved France, and its royal kings, though both had cast him forth, like a leper, from their bosoms. Never until now have I revealed it, but judge if he deserved not well of both, messire, when I tell you that it was he who summoned the English king, in the highest blaze of his glory, to appear before the tribunal of Heaven, and account for the guiltless blood he

had poured! A month passed, and where was the place of the mighty Henry on earth?"

"Was your gossip the famous hermit of Dreux? Good heavens, what a dreadful martyrdom did he court!" exclaimed the friar. "Good Lord! he went with his summons even to the great feast given to celebrate the birth of the baby English king that now is—and but for Henry himself, the denunciator would have been hacked to pieces by the angry nobles!"

"He returned to die among us—pray heaven it was in peace," said Jeanne, devotedly bowing her head in her bosom.

"And it was on the very day—perhaps hour—of his death, that she first heard a voice that told her how she might break her father's heart, and bring us all to shame and ruin!" groaned Jacob d'Arc.

"It was thus, reverend messire," said Jeanne; "my father was angered with me for the visions and strange thoughts that visited me, and forbade me to leave the village or to go any longer to the hermitage. I was praying in my father's orchard, after a day of fasting and meditation, for it was the season of Lent. Often ere then had I beheld marvellous sights—yea, I have seen the dark heaven of night blaze like a hollow sun, crowded with angels more numerous than the stars, and so bright, that but for the purple lightning on the edge of their garments, I could not have distinguished them!—But never until then did any utter the will of the Mightiest One in words intelligible to a poor shepherd girl! It came—a voice only—without substance or form. Its utterance was as that of remote thunder among the hills—faint and ghastly as the echo of men's own voices among solitary rocks. Yea, it seemed as if mine own heart took fearful tones and spoke! Once I thought I was destined to save France by miracles of prayer and abstinence; but since I have known what cruel and warlike men the English are, how they have shamed our noble chivalry, overthrown us on so many basely-fled fields, I have known that only by lance and sword can we redeem the glory of France, and rebuke the arrogance of our conquerors. But, as I have said, a supernatural voice then first did tell me so, commanding me to depart into France, to rend his prey from the leopard, as I have many times torn my lambs from the streaming jaws of the wolf—to redeem France even as she has been lost, by the sharp edge of the sword!"

"Woman, girl, peasant!—a voice has told thee this?" exclaimed the cordelier, breathlessly.

"Yea! and since then voices multitudinous as the stir of the forest leaves in the wind of sunset—as the bubble of the fountain waters in the holy moonlight—have exhorted me unceasingly to my task! But now have all deserted me," replied Jeanne, in tones of enthusiastic kindling that rose like the notes of the Æolian harp, and sank as suddenly to as low and sad a cadence.

"How is that? if these spirits were of good, what hast thou done that they should leave thee?" said the friar, very anxiously.

"I have obeyed an earthly father rather than Him who dwells above the stars. I have turned a deaf ear to their promptings!" replied Jeanne. "And therefore is it that my soul is thus rent with

wolvish and devouring thoughts. The cries of famished Orleans ring for ever in mine ears! When I drink, the purest wells bubble up coloured with the gore that saturates the soil of France! My sleep is not rest! and either I must madden, or obey the mighty summons I have received!"

"O, messire! must it not needs either be madness, or the tempting of the fiend, that can persuade one so lowly born, and poor, and weak, that she can redeem a lost realm, a famished city, and a fugitive king?" ejaculated Jacob d'Arc.

"Son, the poor and lowly-born have ever been greatly honoured by Heaven in its manifestations to earth!" replied the cordelier, in an oracular and lofty tone. "I am myself the son of a wretched vine-clipper of the Garonne! But in the sight of the church all men are equal; kings and peasants are alike but human clay in her pottery! Nay, her most glorious vessels have ever been moulded of what worldly men deem common earth."

"But, messire, these tempters appeared to her beneath the Fairy Tree, where nothing good was ever seen!" persisted Jacob. "And what but fiends and devils would coax a young girl to leave her father's hearth, and become the trull of skinners, thieves, murtherers, and other soldiery, in a camp?"

"Let this fear at least not trouble thee, father!" returned Jeanne, reddening to the deepest hues of virgin modesty. "The white-robed saints Catherine and Margaret are my witnesses! in whose presence I dedicated myself to live and die even as they lived and died, a maiden in body and in soul, pure and unstained as the snow in the clouds of heaven! When in either plight I fail, may their bright presences desert me, and the worst doom thou fearest overtake me!"

"It is easy to promise, but what is so—easy as to keep troth?" said the cordelier, relinquishing the more natural antithesis that rose in his mind in some confusion. "But when didst thou promise this good plight, maiden?"

"When first those virgin brides of Christ appeared to me!" replied Jeanne. "I was then scarcely thirteen summers old. My soul was filled with sadness, for I knew not wherefore I was born and lived, and its deep loneliness brought tears to mine eyes if my lambs but bleated mournfully, if the brightness of distant laughter came flitting past me on the breeze from the places where my kindred rejoiced with their companions. It was evening, and I sat beneath this tree so feared by our villagers, so loved by me—for things of dread ever rather allured than affrighted me. A cloud of the finest purple, edged with a golden brightness, suddenly burst as if with a cataract of light over the fountain, and I saw the Queen of Heaven amidst a multitude of female saints and martyrs weeping tears like stars over the flaming villages of France! anon two fair and gentle women, crowned with flowers of snowy light, glided down a sunbeam to my feet, and I heard unearthly bells ring high in heaven the hour of the Ave-Maria! then I knelt in prayer, and they handed me a nosegay of the whitest lilies, and, although speechless, I knew the

meaning of their chaste and tender eyes, and promised as I have said!"

"Hear her! would she not melt a stone to tears, and convert to goodness the wickedest trull in all Lorraine, or even Paris?" sobbed Isabelle d'Arc.

"Ay, she can talk, she can talk!" exclaimed Jacob. "But, brother Durand, what say you? how did she behave herself in Neuchâteau?"

"Ay, uncle Durand! what say you?" echoed Jeanne d'Arc.

"Nay, brother Jacob, what said I?" replied Durand, startled at the fiery glance cast upon him by the accused; "but, indeed, we knew not what to think! Instead of waiting on the guests,—for the most part, indeed, a worthless company, for it must be owned the knights and esquires nearly all tarry at that cursed Burgundian's hotel of the Golden Fleece,—she would stand questioning them of the wars, and listening to the longest lie that could be told of skirmishes and sieges, and the terrible deeds of arms done in divers places by the doughty men who told them. Then she would try on the armour she was set to polish, wield lance and sword, and learn the cunning use of them from men-at-arms who joyed and laughed to teach so strange an art to a fair, stout wench of her summers. She would mount their fiercest horses, and ride them to drink or pasture, rejoicing in their wildness or fleetness, so that many a time and oft I have nigh lost my senses to see her put them to their savage mettle, and skim the country like a swallow over a pond! all which my wife observing, counselled me to take her home, and wash my hands while they were clean. And you know how a woman's counsel is urged, brother Jacob?"

"All this is strange—very strange—most strange!" said the cordelier, with a musing and profoundly-struck tone. "Can it be indeed that Heaven designs a woman to come to the rescue of France, when her coward men and king desert her?"

"Oh! call him not so, our royal, our beautiful king! the son of Charlemagne, the last hope of France!" exclaimed Jeanne, with even more of passionate enthusiasm than she had yet displayed. "He is in despair. He needs comfort! Heaven sends it to him, but man denies it way!"

"They may be devils, as thy father says, that counsel thee," interrupted the cordelier, peevishly. "Tell me, did these apparitions in aught resemble these?" and he opened an illuminated breviary, wherein was displayed a series of grotesque but dazzlingly-coloured specimens of the celestial hierarchy, apparently copied from the painted windows of cathedrals.

"They were brighter and infinitely nobler and more beautiful of countenance and port—yet they oft wore wreaths and crowns like these," replied Jeanne.

"Surely, then, they must have been angels of paradise—these are taken from the choicest limnings throughout France, that no one may mistake the personages I put on the stage in my moralities; but ye are so cloddy ignorant in Lorraine, that ye know not what those are!" said the friar, with increased admiration. "And indeed she

speaks like one inspired—and altogether untaught in the schools. Why go ye not to some potent man of these parts who favours the Dauphin? for I am a weak and hunted wanderer that may not rest the sole of my feet for half a dozen days at any spot at a time?"

"She has been to Vaucouleurs, and the wise governor turned her from his presence as a madwoman that raved dangerously," said Jacob d'Arc.

"Why then belike she is sane enough," said the cordelier with sudden interest. "He refused me, too,—me, Friar Richard of the Passion,—an hour's asylum within his walls, for fear of the English at Commercy—and God only knows at this moment what hodge-podge they are making of my finest inventions! And be it madness or inspiration, Heaven speaks in both, or either, at times!"

"My curse go with her: the everlasting curse of thy father, Jeanne! if thou leavest me, to execute the behest of the accursed spirits that have so long laboured to win thee to thy soul's destruction!" shouted Jacob d'Arc, clasping his wrinkled and trembling hands upwards in wrath at this unexpected issue.

"Old man, thou art strangely to blame in thus arrogating a power that belongs only to the Church, whether to ban or bless!" said the religious manager, with a gesture of disdain that seemed to render the anathema of no avail. Then, as if struck with a sudden and weighty thought, he continued, "I say not that your daughter is inspired; or, if so, whether by angel or by fiend. But I will receive her into confession, and strive to understand her more clearly. The Church hath profited too much at various seasons by heavenly aid not to examine with humility the claims of those who announce a mission, even in this day, among us. Otherwise, I say nothing. Come with me, maiden, into the chapel, and in the presence of our Lady I will fathom what truth may be in thee. The rest retire with my benediction, which hath been held a fructifying dew."

CHAPTER V.

THE WOOING OF WULFSTAN OF WARBOIS.

"Oh, sir, 'tis dangerous to soar to these great heights! The vulture and the falcon sail midway between heaven and earth; and woe to the ambitious jackdaw that soars into their aerie."—*The Prohibited Comedy.*

Jacob and his company returned to Domremy, by the express command of the friar, leaving him to sift the conscience of his extraordinary penitent at leisure. But almost as they entered the villlage, the anxious eyes of the old herdsman discerned a new subject of disquiet. Immediately before his house was grouped a company of mounted archers, breastplate, axe, and cross-bow glittering in the sun, who were feeding their horses at a heap of oats and hay which one of his own labourers kept respectfully scattering for their use.

Observing the approach of the villagers, one, who seemed to be leader of the military guests, sauntered leisurely forward to meet them. As he came, he tossed a cur that rushed out to bark at the heels of his horse, to a surprising distance, on his spear, and it was then that Jacob d'Arc recognized the English red-cross in the archer's steel cap, and gave himself and family up for lost.

Nevertheless, the soldier, when he arrived among the villagers, addressed them in very rude French, but in a tone of condescending and affable superiority. "Which among ye, friends, is a certain husbandman, by name Jacob d'Arc, of this villeinage?" he inquired.

"What want you with him, messire?" said Jacob, putting the hood from his grey locks with tremulous humility.

"Nothing but good, if he stands not in his own light, with his back to the sun, and his face to the wind," replied the English archer, a rush of colour visiting his face, that visibly deepened its natural ruddy hue. "But thereupon we must have speech out of so much hearing! Let me taste the wine of these parts, if thou art even the man I would speak withal. The rest of you quarter yourselves as ye best may, doing no damage to any roof-tree; for, mark ye, there is a rope hanging to one and to all! Meanwhile, gaffer," he continued, heavily alighting in his cumbrous habiliments, "I will give thee a name by which to be familiar with me, for I am neither knight nor messire, but a yeoman-archer and vassal of the lordship of Caister in Norfolk, and by the good favour of my lord, Sir John Fastolfe, within these few days, verdurer of his forests of Commercy. Wulfstan of Warbois my mother called me, and I desire no better title from any man, gentle or simple. So lead the way, old sanglier, into thy haunt, and let us see that fair young sow of thy litter—for I discern her not among all these bonny freshets."

A general flutter and coquettish simpering among the village girls, though scarcely yet recovered from the panic occasioned by the first apparition of English soldiery in their hitherto secluded and quiet district, acknowledged how generally this compliment was accepted.

"I have neither sow nor sounder fit for the market, messire," replied Jacob, quiveringly.

"Art thou not father to one Joan d'Arc?" said the archer. "But I see thou art, for she something favours thee. Let us into thy house, for scandal is best kept at home, and mayhap my news of her may not be for every ear."

"You are heartily welcome to my roof, messire—but I am a poor man, I have nothing worthy of your acceptance," said Jacob d'Arc.

"Nay, we have inquired all about thee; thou art a good substantial man of thy degree," returned the archer, good-humouredly clapping the old man on the back. "But I want little of thee, save what the poorest are the gladdest to spare. Keep your ears pricking for the blast of the horn, companions; and now lead the way, old sire, for there was never luck in a dry-lipped bargain."

Greatly perplexed, but aware of the prudence of conciliating so

formidable a visitor, Jacob threw open the door of his house, and ceremoniously escorted the archer into his dwelling. His family followed, and the rest of the villagers, discovering that each had a guest or two quartered upon them, imitated the example with them.

Wulfstan of Warbois looked eagerly round, on entering, for some object which he did not find. But he observed the image of the Virgin over the mantelpiece, reverentially sank on his knees, and muttered some broken Latin scraps, which from his childhood he had been taught was the proper invocation to the Queen of Heaven. By the time this orison concluded, the whole family had so assiduously bestirred themselves—especially the discreet and active Margot—that the materials of a very fair repast were spread before the English archer. Jacob d'Arc had taken a stool opposite the guest, his children grouped themselves in readiness to serve him, and Durand stood by with a horn of wine, which he handed over with professional celerity, the moment he heard the Amen pronounced.

"Goodwife, your health; fair damsel, yours: but it is your sister I come after—where is she?" said the stranger, courteously bottoming the horn at a draught. "Be not afraid, good people; though you have reason," he continued, in a perplexed manner. "Neither blame my lord, Sir John, so much as the bishop: for until he urged him to it with as strong words as ever I heard used to knight and noble—until he had shown him what a bitter Dolphiner this wild wench of yours is said to be in this country, he would not hear of doing her any harm. But, to make a long arrow of a short flight, I am sent to bring her prisoner to Commercy, lest she should make more of her mind, or peradventure for her rash doing yesterday, when she killed my lord's best hound, or for some other reason why, for my lord the bishop is very wise and full of policy, and moreover hath his money in the matter of our conquest of this country."

"My dreams are coming to pass, even worse than I dreamed them!" ejaculated Jacob d'Arc. "But, messire, surely you are mistaken; my daughter is but a poor peasant girl, in no way likely to trouble great knights and prelates; and you have seen some other at a place of monstrous delusions—at the Witches' Fountain and Tree!"

"Have you many witches in these parts? Do your old women frequent them much?" said the archer, with some perturbation.

"Our young women are perchance the worst—all are bad enough!" said Jacob, bitterly. "But men often see strange phantoms and false actings in that accursed place! Your hound might well be slain by one of the hags in my daughter's likeness, because they know how I hate them, to bring ye upon us to harry us!"

"Nay, for this good companion of flesh and blood was with her," returned Wulfstan, smiling and nodding at Durand. "But be not so fearful, good father: I have thought of a way to make all odds even."

"But how, messire?" said Jacob, very anxiously, for his avarice took the alarm instantly, and suggested to him that he was to be compelled to ransom his daughter at a price.

Wulfstan paused, as if striving to arrange his ideas in an orderly march, assisting the process with several deep draughts of wine, officiously renewed by Durand Laxart, who began to apprehend that he also had a share in the peril announced; and the whole auditory awaited their guest's reply with intense expectation. Suddenly he blushed of a deep poppy hue, and gulping down a strong feeling which seemed to rise in his throat, exclaimed, "Troth, old gaffer, give her to me for a wife, and I gage my right hand all shall be as smooth again as a hauberk of polished steel! I trow ye have some clerk among ye that will patter a blessing for a silver noble, and we will bed us this blessed night in Commercy; and there will be no further questioning for aught she may have said or done in her maiden estate; and thou wilt have a friend in the buttery that will help thee to a slice in many a brawn thou didst never dream to taste, for all thy dreams!" And to conceal his modest confusion at his own offer, honest Wulfstan fell to eating as if he had been famishing for several days.

"I have surely swallowed a filbert-husk, and it will choke me!" said Durand, coughing to hide the laughter that, in spite of fear and surprise, irresistibly tickled his lungs.

It was very different with Jacob d'Arc. The fears from which this most unexpected proposal relieved him, and the flattering prospect of advantages opened, caused him to view it in the most favourable light.

"But did my noble lord, Sir John, consent to this plan, Sir Archer?" he inquired, suddenly confused with an opposite series of ideas.

"Ho, by St. George, how should he, when I never mentioned it to him?" replied Wulfstan. "But what nay can he have in the matter, sithence her mouth will be as well shut by my kisses as by the padlocks on the dungeons of Commercy? So, gaffer, never another word, but tell me is it a bargain or not? In my own country, I am a yeoman of good degree; and in this I am captain of threescore archers, and verdurer of all this forest of Commercy, which, I am told, tires seven horses to ride its bounds. Will you give me the wench or not, for I ask nothing else of yours—not so much as a luckpenny to seal the bargain?"

"But, messire, you have scarcely seen her!" sighed Jabob, calling to mind some of his daughter's peculiarities.

"I saw as much of her as I could see in a year, at yonder tree," replied the wooer. "It is not every one would make so fair an offer, as you might learn at Commercy; for our discipline is sadly changed since we knit hand in glove with the bishop's followers. Mass, and I little thought once myself, that ever I should seek a Frenchwoman in the way of honesty; and so I promised my poor mother when I bussed her at parting. But we all live to change our minds, and better do ill than worse; and I like your daughter for that she has the true spirit of a soldier's bride, and is as goodly a make of woman as ever mine eye rested on."

"But she is a girl of a strange demeanour," interposed Durand,

"that sends all her wooers a-packing with a pain in their ears, and although you be a jolly soldier, Master Verdurer, you know the proverb says, 'We cannot make a sheep-dog of a wolf.'"

"Leave me alone for that—I have tickled trouts into baskets ere now!" returned Wulfstan, with a merry wink. "'Tis but the women's trick to make us the keener, with their nays and prythees. I am an old woodsman, and have I not seen the doe fly on the wind when the deer pursued—but stop and browse raspberries when he stands at gaze?"

"She shall be yours, Master Verdurer! She shall be yours, whether she will or no!" exclaimed Jacob d'Arc, who had been silently reckoning up all the advantages of the proposition. "Set your mind at ease on that score; she shall be your wife, or no longer my daughter."

"Yonder then she comes with Dan Richard, and in as solemn discourse as two owls in a hollow oak!" said Durand. "Pray Heaven he hath talked her into plain woman's senses, and she will not need to be asked twice."

In spite of his heroic vaunts, Wulfstan became more alarmed than if he had heard that a score of French men-at-arms were on the threshold, while Jacob hastily arose. He stared irresolutely at the door, which opened and admitted the cordelier with his penitent, and then Wulfstan started up like a bull, stumbled upon in a pasture by some unwary traveller. At all events, his apparition was greeted with some such consternation and surprise by the friar.

"All blessed saints! she is then a crafty sorceress, and I am betrayed!" he exclaimed. "I thought it was impossible that such glorious goodness could be in woman? Holy saints, I am lost."

"Jeanne, look what thy mad pranks have done!" broke in Jacob d'Arc. "No treason is meant you, reverend brother; but here are some sent to bear my daughter to the dungeons of Commercy, that will not easily be denied, unless she takes this noble archer for a husband—to whom I have thereupon plighted my hand."

"Good father, you have come like the hammer on the nail, to rivet our bargain!" said the verdurer, recovering from his confusion. "What say you, my buxom maiden? Canst thou love a soldier, who is in want of a wife, and who will love thee better than horse and harness, and goods and gear of whatever sort? Say yea at once, like an honest woman's daughter, that thinks her mother's ways clean enough for her to tread in, and I will make thee a wedding-gift of all my share in the plunder of Orleans! for we are to lose nothing for being absent on other warfare."

"What say you, daughter? Or, am I altogether in a dream?" said the cordelier, while Jeanne d'Arc looked from person to person of the group, with eyes that gleamed with mingled amazement and wrath.

Jacob d'Arc perceived that it was now incumbent upon him to explain matters, which he did by sternly recapitulating the particulars of the verdurer's information, his proposal, and his own acceptance on behalf of his daughter. It was observable that Friar Richard

recovered breath and colour during this communication, and it almost seemed as if he, too, stifled no slight tendency to mirth, when Jeanne turned her wild, flashing glance from the speaker to him.

"Son, what mean you?" he observed, addressing Jacob d'Arc. "Has she not avowed before ye all, as she has to me in confession, that she has dedicated her chastity even as a nun's, to Heaven? And though matrimony be a blessed sacrament, St. Paul justly commends rather that holy simplicity of existence she has chosen. Therefore, son, depart in peace, and seek a wife among thine own country-folk and kin."

"'Tis too far to cross the bitter sea for one, to-night, father," replied Wulfstan; "and a wife or a prisoner must I take to Commercy, before sunrise! And, by my faith, I think that even bolts and bars will scarcely keep her from worse treatment among those sons of the devil of Franquet d'Arras, unless a stout English arm be her friend-in-need! Tut, let us take a turn in the moonlight together, and if I bring her not to my mind in half an hour's sand——"

"Beware how you approach me, English ravisher," interrupted Jeanne, starting back several paces, and suddenly tearing her father's rusty spear from the wall. "Look! though my weapon seem to thee but a shepherd's crook in a woman's hand, there is in it the might of a thunderbolt!"

There was something so fierce and wild in the look and gesture of Jeanne d'Arc, that even the steel-nerved archer was awed, and halted in the advance with which he accompanied his words of wooing.

"What is the matter? Is she mad, gaffer?" he ejaculated, after a pause.

"No, no; but she is possessed by seven thousand devils!" replied the father, irritated out of all patience. "She was born for the ruin of all of us—and the witches have taught her to do it!"

"That is to be learned, old man! You speak with marvellous presumption," said Friar Richard, with a majestic tone and manner he could assume at will from practice in the impersonation of the loftiest members of the celestial mythology of the age. "Peace, archer, and approach her not! She is under the ban of the Church, and it is at mortal peril to your soul as well as carcass if you presume to touch her. Return to Commercy, and inform my lord the bishop that a brother of St. Austin has found such matter of suspicion in her concerning sorceries and dealings with unholy spirits, that he has seen fit to subject her to a severe ordeal! My lord the bishop will satisfy Sir John that the spiritual hath ever place before the temporal jurisdiction!"

Jeanne looked with an expression of astonishment at the cordelier, who, plucking his cowl over his face, muttered in a low tone,—"Patience, patience!—there is no other deliverance."

"A witch? and sorceries! and dealings with the Evil One?" gasped Wulfstan, turning deadly pale, and retreating several paces. "Mass, and St. George, and our Lady of Lichfield!—and truly I

thought it a marvellous thing that I should take so strange a liking all at once, at the first look she cast at me! And a French girl, too! —Nay, an ye be such a village as that—witches and wizards all—St. Ninian be my speed, but I'll begone ere ye make hell-broth of my bones!"

And with his teeth chattering like dice in a box, the English archer —one famous for courage among all the gallant yeomanry who followed their lords' banners in France, strode to the door. Here he raised his horn and blew a faint blast; but his whole company appeared so suddenly on the sound, from the neighbouring houses, that he was startled even with their appearance. This consternation was not diminished by the prayers and entreaties with which the whole household of Jacob d'Arc—excepting his daughter Jeanne—followed him. Even the friar was alarmed at the effect of his own artifice, and joined in the attempt to soften it.

"I say not she's a witch, my son," he said. "She may be merely possessed of certain fiends of ambition and arrogance, which it is the Church's business to root from men's breasts,—and by how much more from women's! Or she may be an impostor," he continued, glancing nervously back, to be certain that Jeanne did not overhear him. "It is not long to abye the ordeal to which I purpose subjecting her. To-morrow is the feast of our dear Lady's purification, at which time the spirits of evil are in entire subjection to our authority. I intend to celebrate a mass beneath the Fairy Tree, of power to put all the devils of hell in the Red Sea, with Pharaoh and his host. And there we will leave her alone till midnight; for if these apparitions visit her, they will be compelled to declare their real names and purposes, and wherefore they trouble this woman's soul even as with the inward heavings of the fire and subterraneous thunders of an earthquake!"

"Let her pass this ordeal, messire," said Jacob, "and by my grey beard, if you will have her, she shall be yours, or I will shake her off like a chestnut to the wild boars."

"Nay, if she is a witch, I'll none of her!" said the affrighted archer. "We have an old stump of a tree in a forest of the Yar that was once a hunter who offended a witch. Or she may change me into a wolf, and hunt me with mine own hounds! God give ye good days! but wo betide ye when I return, for I will come with as many torches as there are thatched roofs in Domremy."

And with these parting words the insulted wooer repulsed Jacob's attention in holding his stirrup as he mounted, by flinging himself into the saddle without setting his steel-pointed buskin in any support. He then, in spite of continued and most earnest expostulations and promises, hurriedly mustered his troop, and rode off at the head of it without a single word of courteous farewell.

"I see the end of it all," groaned Jacob, as the last lance gleamed out of sight. "We shall be harried, robbed, murdered, and plundered; and all for letting a madwoman go at large!"

"I have heard much of the English superstition, but this passes belief," muttered the friar to himself; for even among their contempo-

raries of the fifteenth century our ancestors enjoyed a singular reputation for credulity. "Comfort yourself, old man," he continued with animation. "We have seen how ever your daughter prevails in every contest, for I also witnessed from my rocks the fall and triumph of her stag. And thus perchance, by her means, shall France arise from her doom and desolation. Not always shall they taunt me, saying that my words are as corn scattered on the rocks. The time of the harvest is at hand, and already I see it waving golden over the fields of France. And even as all things require a beginning—yea, yonder sun itself dawns with a speck of light, so may to-morrow's ordeal prove the first utterance of a mighty word? I speak in parables, for the light must be shaded a while from weak eyes."

"Neither church nor churchman shall rob me of my child," shouted Jacob d'Arc. "I refuse her not to your ordeal, and if she be in compact with the fiends, may they use it to tear her into more shreds than the sheep leave on the hedges at shearing time! But if afterwards she refuses to wed the brave and honest English soldier, I will have her chained in one of my cowsheds for a lunatic, whose ravings will bring us all to destruction."

Jacob re-entered his dwelling without having the civility to ask the friar to accompany him, who, after a moment's meditation, took his way up the village to the house of Dom Joffrid, the curate. The jealousy subsisting between the secular clergy and the mendicant orders gave Father Richard very reasonable misgivings as to the degree of welcome he might receive. But motives paramount in a man of his ambitious and intriguing character impelled the cordelier to encounter every risk in the prosecution of the enterprise he had formed.

And now a new persecution awaited Jeanne d'Arc, founded on the advantageous proposals of her English wooer. Her father found her, on his return, calmly seated at her wheel, engaged in the occupation which, next to the care of a flock, was most favourable to her habitual indulgence in revery and meditation. But in vain did Jacob d'Arc and the rest of her kinsfolk set before her all the benefits of the projected alliance, and all the fearful things to be apprehended from its rejection. Her constant reply was an entreaty that she might at least be spared consideration of the subject until she had undergone the ordeal which was to determine whether her visions were of heaven or hell, or even of madness. Jacob d'Arc, at length, irritated to excess with her obstinacy and his own apprehensions, swore by the image of the Virgin on the hearth, an oath which was his Styx, that he would force her to wed the verdurer of Commercy immediately afterwards, or hurl his parental curse upon her, and expel her for ever from his house.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ORDEAL OF JEANNE D'ARC.

"It must be so; for miracles are ceas'd;
And therefore we must needs admit the means,
How things are perfected."—*Shakspeare.*

THE Feast of the Purification, or Candlemas, as it was called in England, was one of peculiar interest throughout Christendom, but rarely of so much as on this occasion in the obscure village of Domremy. When the day came, the little church was crowded with nearly all the inhabitants of the district in their holiday costumes, carring wax candles of various sizes and colours, as offerings. The altar was decorated with flowers, and Dom Joffrid appeared in his most splendid vestments, of tarnished white damask embroidery, to perform high mass. On this occasion he was assisted by Friar Richard, who, with great humility, undertook the office of clerk. The curate shared the general dislike of his brethren to the mendicant orders; but he was an old man, as superstitious as any of his parishioners, and not feeling the courage to take part in so formidable an exorcism, he quietly resigned his office to the intruder. Moreover, he was a Burgundian, and desired no share in an affair that might redound to the credit of the opposite party.

The showy decorations of the church, on which the curate and his housekeeper usually spent many anxious weeks of preparation, scarcely divided the public attention with Jeanne d'Arc. Those vague impressions of the marvellous, produced by the dreamy grandeur of her character, even on the ignorant and half-brutal population of her native district, were now gathered into a focus by the strange nature of the ordeal she was to undergo. The fervour of devotion in which she seemed so wrapped, so as to be insensible to the curiosity she excited: the bright expression of enthusiasm and hope joined with ravening impatience in her countenance; its glowing paleness, amidst her wild black tresses, like that of the moon from the clouds of a stormy night—all contributed, with her renown, to give her something of an unearthly and supernatural interest. This was greatly increased by a discourse Friar Richard delivered from the altar, after the ceremony of blessing the candles, in which he invited the charitable assistance of the congregation in aid of the task he had undertaken. At least, that was the pretext he alleged to win Dom Joffrid's assent to his delivery of an harangue, probably intended to produce more powerful effects.

Friar Richard's sermon was certainly the most interesting delivered within men's memory in the church of Domremy. Its subject was in-

herently so, and will continue as long as the shadow of the supernatural world rests on this; and what age, however blazing with light, shall dissipate it? He was perfectly familiar with the whole celestial and demoniac mythology of the popular belief, and his object seemed to be to place these in the strongest opposition before his audience, that they might form their own judgment as to which class the apparitions of Jeanne d'Arc belonged. To the general awe and conviction, the learned friar himself had evidently no doubt that spirits, whether of good or evil, had appeared to her! No suspicion of her sanity rested on his mind, though he confessed his first ideas on the subject had suggested some doubts on that point. The magnificent eulogium he now pronounced on the qualities of Jeanne's intellect, her courage, patience, chastity, and disinterestedness, amazed the simple villagers of Domremy, who wondered how such striking characteristics had escaped their own observation. Dom Joffrid grew uneasy; but more especially when the usurper continued in a strain which grew every instant more anti-Burgundian.

Friar Richard declared his belief that the maiden of Domremy had doubtless seen visions, and received high promises from supernatural agencies. Now, as the tree is known by its fruit, it was incumbent to consider what was the nature of the promptings that visited her, whether for good or evil. The deliverance of France from the strangling grasp of its enemies was the mission declared, and the cordelier proceeded to argue the justice, expediency, and probability, that such might now be the will of Heaven. He showed how France was in an especial manner beloved by the Virgin Mary, insomuch that it had the honour to bear her lilies in its coat-of-arms. He showed how its sins might reasonably be considered as expiated in an appalling picture of the ruin and sufferings endured by its people. He recited various ancient prophecies; in particular, one of the Magus Merlin, which expressly declared that a maiden should undo the work of a wife, and deliver France from an invader. Still the sagacious friar was willing to admit that though promises had been made by apparitions wearing all the characteristics of celestial beings, they were liable to suspicion as being offered in unhallowed times and places; and therefore he had chosen the vigil of a most blessed festival—the festival of the Virgin Protectress of France—to subject Jeanne d'Arc to an ordeal. He invited all present to accompany him to the Fairy Tree and Fountain at nightfall, there to destroy the power of any evil denizen by a solemn consecration of the haunted district. After which they would leave Jeanne to essay her courage and faith alone, and obtain some clear revelation from indubitable instruments of the will of Heaven!

A general and awe-struck assent rewarded the eloquence of the friar; and certainly he had no reason to complain of a slack attendance when the hour of darkness and of the ordeal arrived. Bedridden old women seemed miraculously to recover the use of their limbs to transport them to so wonderful a spectacle. A procession was formed soon after vespers, and consisted not only of the inhabitants of Domremy, but of many from neighbouring districts. At the earnest

entreaties of his housekeeper, Dom Joffrid had excused himself from being of the party, until the desolation in which the village would be left occurred to them both in such appalling colours, that they resolved in preference to join in it. Nearly all the assistants carried lighted torches or tapers consecrated at the morning's mass, and the curate armed himself with a lofty candelabrum, belonging to the church, stuck all over with gilded thorns. He bore it with difficulty along; but, for certain reasons, would suffer no one to relieve him of the burden. The truth was, it had been brought by a pilgrim from the Holy Land, and its rays were considered of efficacy in facilitating the passage of the soul in its agony, no evil spirit being able to sustain its lustre. It might, therefore, be of great use to its bearer on the present occasion.

And thus, surrounded by the members of her family, after a day of earnest devotion and fasting, Jeanne d'Arc was escorted to the place of ordeal.

To some, fearful apprehensions the night seemed to close in strangely early, and others imagined they noted occasional gleams of lightning in the leaden-grey twilight. The procession moved slowly on, headed by Friar Richard, twinkling like an army of glow-worms, when it debouched in the valley of the haunted tree from the overhanging woods of Domremy, and with such accompaniments it may be thought that the associations of the scene arose in the minds of the villagers with fearful vividness. But, encouraged by the demeanour of Friar Richard, the timidest continued to advance until they reached the Fountain of the Fatal Ladies.

The vast beech-tree stood before them towering like the giant of antiquity, with all his hundred arms outspread. Early as the spring was that year in Lorraine, it was remarked in fearful silence that the white blossoms of the mast were already appearing. It was afterwards averred by believers that when the cordelier proceeded to bless the water of the fountain, it gushed for some time with pure white milk! However that may be, he used the now hallowed stream in its turn to perform a general lustration of the tree and all that its shadow rested on. He sprinkled the whole locality, as if his office had been the fairy one of covering the turf with refreshing dews, chanting a Credo amidst the devout responses of the audience. After establishing this outwork, he proceeded in a more precise form of exorcism. The sonorous voice of the friar was audible to a considerable distance, enumerating every species of evil spirit known to the popular creed, and casting them by name into the bottomless pit, whence they arose. This ghastly litany occupied some time in reciting, and filled the minds of the auditors with terror.

That ceremonial concluded, the friar and the whole assemblage knelt, while the former uttered a supplication to the Virgin Mother, whom he constituted guardian of the place. He besought her, that if the powers of evil had seduced the maiden of Domremy, if ambition, or hypocrisy, or any human prompting had induced her to feign the revelation she announced, that the sanctity of the cross, of the blessing, and of the time, might be of no avail, and that the spirits of the

tree might use their malignant will upon her! but that if indeed her mission was inspired by Heaven, he implored our Lady to commission some of her angelic court to declare her purposes clearly to the fated instrument.

Jeanne d'Arc's amen was the only one, not even excepting Friar Richard's, which came forth freely and calmly in response.

All then arose, and Jacob d'Arc turned pale when he heard the cordelier announce, that now they were to depart and leave his daughter to her ordeal. He murmured words of remonstrance, that died away on his white and trembling lips, when he saw with what joyful serenity Jeanne turned to bid her friends farewell. The sobs and tears into which her mother and sister, and nearly all the women, burst, did indeed somewhat trouble this calm; but they compelled Jacob to master his own feelings, which was a great point gained for Jeanne, in whose nature filial tenderness was one of the most deeply-rooted sentiments. Friar Richard also applied his consolations, by assuring the villagers that he would spend the night in prayer for the maiden in the hermitage above. He entreated them all to return to Domremy, and join their venerable pastor in the same kind office until midnight, when they might return and escort her home from her ordeal in triumph.

Curiosity in all, compassion and affection in many, produced a general promise of compliance with this request. Friar Richard then planted two stakes, in the form of a cross, beneath the tree. He exhorted the maiden not to leave its propinquity on any account, and informed her that the moment was arrived in which she was to be left to the ordeal. "In the name of God, good father," was her unshaken reply. Somewhat surprised, but rejoicing secretly in the courage of his penitent, Richard uttered a fervent benediction, collected the assemblage as a shepherd gathers his flock, and gave the word to depart in procession, himself bringing up the rear. In a few minutes Jeanne d'Arc was alone, with her own grand reveries and heroic heart in the haunted solitude of the Fairy Tree.

On entering the wood, the cordelier left the villagers to pursue their way to Domremy, while he turned aside to ascend the rocks to the hermitage of St. Mary. Silently and drearily the procession continued its advance under convoy of Dom Joffrid, who, old and feeble as he was, hastened the march almost into a trot. In this manner the whole company re-entered Domremy, and, agreeably to promise, hastened to the little church, to offer up prayers on behalf of the ordealist.

Dom Joffrid was not without some feeling of pity for his young parishioner, and he determined to celebrate a good long mass in her behalf. Jacob d'Arc, Durand, and the rest of the villagers, joined in this devotion with unflagging zeal; and thus time wore on. Greatly as Candlemas wax was prized, and held to be a valuable possession, no man extinguished his taper on this occasion. But the darkness of night fast deepened in the lengthening wicks or departing gleams. A gusty wind arose, and the rough murmur of the yew-trees in the neighbouring churchyard seemed to the listeners like a whispering

dialogue of the dead, disturbed in their narrow homes. The buzz of curiosity and conjecture gradually died away—even the muttering of the old men and women who gathered to exchange the fearful traditions of their youth, and nodded their palsied heads in conclave, like a knot of thistles.

The offering of the mass ceased at length, and Dom Joffrid busied himself restlessly about the altar, trimming the tapers, reciting Paternosters, and otherwise striving to make himself agreeable to the saints. Wearied at length with this occupation, he seated himself beside the candelabrum from the Holy Land, and with his hands clasped beneath his stole, that he might not soil it, was striving to soothe himself into a doze, when suddenly all present were startled by the clatter of a numerous body of horsemen entering the village at a gallop.

All that could, rushed to the open portal of the church, without venturing to leave it, in their fear of some supernatural presence. But the riders drew up, with the dexterity of practised men-at-arms, around it, and Durand recognized, with terror nearly as great as anything spiritual could have occasioned, the black surcoats and corslets, wrought with death's heads and cross-bones, of the Skinners of Franquet d'Arras.

A leader, at whose stern, hoarse tones this halt was made, immediately quitted their ranks, and rode alone to the church-porch. The villagers retreated in fear as he approached, and huddled together on each side, so as to leave a clear passage. He rode into the church itself, as if not remembering, or heedless of, the sanctity of the place, and Durand's dismay was heightened by recognizing in him the terrible Dragon Knight, Sir John Fastolfe, now sheathed in heavy armour from head to foot, but sufficiently revealed by the insignia of the Order of St. George, his commanding figure, and austere tones.

Dom Joffrid started up, and though evidently not inclined to play the good shepherd's part, and give his life for his flock, stared in mute expectation at the warlike apparition.

"Be not afraid, brethren," said Sir John Fastolfe, glancing somewhat scornfully around. "I am lieutenant of Champagne and Brie for my lord the duke of Bedford, and yesterday I sent among ye to arrest a certain mis-spoken woman of these parts, who endeavours what in her lies to excite ye to resistance against mine authority. Ye did deny her to me, and I am come for her in person. Let me see him who gainsays!"

"Not I, my lord," replied Dom Joffrid, tremulously. "But whom mean you?—for, God forbid, being such a weak, poor little village, and Burgundians at heart, we should deny your lordship any prisoner you may be pleased to make."

"It is a peasant-woman, one that utters prophecies and spells against your sovereign lord and mine, King Henry," said the lieutenant of Champagne and Brie, with considerable agitation in his tones. "Deliver her to me!"

"My lord," said Jacob d'Arc, throwing himself on his knees, and clasping and wringing his hands, "you behold her wretched father!

Spare her, for she is a madwoman, or worse, and is now suffering ordeal beneath the Fairy Tree of Domremy, to know what judgment is due to her, by command of a holy limitour."

"At the Fairy Tree! Is she alone, or is this limitour with her?" returned the knight, with sudden and singular vehemence.

"Alone, unless the fiends are with her," replied Dom Joffrid. "A mischief and a murrain to her, for it cannot be denied she is a partisan of the Dauphin's, to the backbone."

"Your lordship has already seen how she cannot be harmed nor captured by human might," interposed Durand Laxart. "Be pleased to spare her until it can be seen whether she is a witch or no."

"Human might has not yet been tried upon her: methinks there is yet enough in this arm, that has oft overthrown the men of France, to overcome the resistance of a woman," replied Fastolfe. "At all events, I will put myself on the venture. Ho, there, Franquet d'Arras! Let no man follow me—I go alone to capture this sorceress, who has stricken with terror my bold English hearts. But ye are too familiar with the devil to fear him."

The captain of the skinners rode forward at the sound of his name, and burst into an obstreperous laugh of applause. But this effusion was checked by the haughty gesture of the Dragon Knight, who renewed his command that no one should be permitted to follow him from Domremy. "I have not forgotten where the Fairy Tree stands, and doubt not to find my way," he added, in a low, thoughtful tone; and bending to the altar and crossing himself, he backed his steed out of the chancel; then applying the spur to its wet flanks, in a few moments he vanished down the village in the direction of the haunted valley.

Simultaneously with this departure, the horsemen formed a cordon round the churchyard, and Franquet stationed himself at the porch, to prohibit all exit. "I have ye in the neck of a bottle," he exclaimed laughingly, "and we will have your witch shortly tied to a horse's tail, on her way to a jolly bonfire."

"They will kill my child—let them kill me with her!" yelled Jacob d'Arc, making a frantic attempt to rush past. Durand drew him violently back just in time to prevent his brains from being dashed out by the stroke of Franquet's mace.

"Peace, old fool! your daughter is in no present danger," said the captain of the skinners. "Dost thou think the monk-knight of England hath the spirit of Franquet d'Arras, who would hug the devil himself in a fair woman's form? He hates women, on my troth, as the sweet heiress of Commercy, his prisoner, methinks, would tell ye. He will do your daughter no harm, until he hangs her from the high watch-tower of Commercy, and ye can see her as far as Domremy thence; so take comfort, and keep your screeches till there is better occasion."

Jacob d'Arc wrung his hands hopelessly, and throwing himself prostrate before the altar, began raving rather than praying for assistance from all the saints in the calendar.

Meanwhile the Dragon Knight held on his way, at a speed that

seemed almost to establish a better claim to the cognomen than the terrors of the multitude could bestow. Fastolfe himself was amazed at the vehemence and zeal he put in an enterprise having apparently so simple an object in view as the arrest of a country girl with a shrewish tongue. It was thus that his ally, the bishop of Beauvais, had represented it to him, while urging the political advisabilty of the measure. It is true that the English leader was conscious of another, deeper, and less excusable motive, which exerted upon him a great and even wonderful influence, if the circumstances of his education and character are not kept in view.

Sir John Fastolfe was descended from an illustrious ancestry, but by a father whose ill renown it had been the labour of his own life to efface. Henry V., whose licentious favourite and misleader this personage had been, removed the son from the contagion of his sire's example; and, as the most effectual means, intended him to be reared to the priesthood. He was educated in the monastic household of Cardinal Beaufort, where his mind acquired much of that superstition and melancholy hue which rendered him in after life so strong a contrast to the brilliant buffoon whose name only he inherited. But an irresistible propensity to seek for glory in more active pursuits, and the stirring events of the times, made the young acolyte a soldier under the banner of his victorious patron. A congenial reserve and gravity of demeanour recommended him to the favour of the king's brother, the Regent Bedford, which his distinguished exploits amply vindicated; and until the moment when he first beheld Jeanne d'Arc, ambition and the thirst for military glory and pre-eminence had seemed the only passions that held sway in the heart of Sir John Fastolfe. It was thought by many that the beautiful heiress of Commercy herself vainly lavished upon him the allurements of her charms and coquetry. But now, with all the illusions the passions love to disguise themselves in, Fastolfe could certainly not persuade himself that his motives in yielding to the bishop's angry promptings against the girl of Domremy were purely political.

Fastolfe rapidly reached the outskirts of the village, and checked his speed to consider what route he should take to reach the Fairy Tree and Fountain. But when he had concluded to follow a path leading through a wood in the direction he sought, he was struck with a singular sentiment of superstitious alarm on finding that his horse refused to advance. The most docile of chargers, that obeyed almost the impulse of its master's will, resolutely withstood for a time all the persuasives of spur and threat. It snorted wildly, wheeled round and round, stood nearly upright on its haunches in resistance, and in the struggle skin and mane were bathed in sweat and foam. But the stern will of its master was not to be baffled; and after a short but severe contest the steed again dashed forward at a frantic pace.

The path led, as Fastolfe expected, into the valley of the Meuse, and the murmur of water among the rocks in front, and the vast-spreading apparition of the Beech Tree, revealed the place of his search. In the obscurity of the night he could not perceive the

maiden herself, and he pushed more cautiously forward until the hot hoofs of his steed splashed in the waters of the Fountain. Apprehending that he might trample upon her if he continued to advance without ascertaining her exact position, he halted at this point, and peered anxiously round through the bars of his helmet. At this moment it chanced that the moon, which had long struggled amidst watery clouds, shone fully and broadly forth. A hollow amphitheatre of black clouds seemed to form a canopy overhead, resembling the crater of a volcano. By this dark radiance the Dragon Knight suddenly discerned Jeanne d'Arc, standing beside the rude cross erected by Friar Richard, and, to his surprise, gazing at him with very slight, if any, sentiment of fear, and certainly with none of reverence or welcome.

"Didst thou expect me, witch, or some less mortal a visitant, that thou lookest so unmovedly and sternly at me?" he said, with a gentleness very unusual in his tones. "Or dost thou hope to affright me with an angry stare, as thou didst my lubbard deputy, thine unlicensed wooer, Wulfstan of Warbois?"

"Whoever thou art, in God's name, depart, or take some form less hateful in my sight than that of the ravager of Commercy!" replied Jeanne. "The fiend knows but little of my heart, if thou art one of the tempters he has sent me."

"A tempter! Nay, maiden, 'tis thou art the tempter, and mayhap one that seducest to mortal sin, if, as they say, thou art of those unhappy ones who seek the fellowship of the powers of air!" said Fastolfe. "Or it may be that Heaven designs to prevent a greater crime by a less: such things have been, or learned schoolmen lie! What, if this feeling that has possessed me from the first instant when I gazed on thy noble and daring beauty, be prompted to save thy soul from the snares of the Devourer? Either indeed thou hast magic in thee, or I know not what talisman has drawn me hither to tell thee that—though I seek thee seemingly in wrath and anger—though never until now have my lips pronounced the word, methinks I love thee, and would win thee only to share with me the pomp and power and glory my sword has gathered round me like a miser's treasure which he ne'er enjoys."

"The blood of France is indeed red and smoking on thy sword," replied Jeanne, calmly. "Foolish servant of Hell! not in the likeness of one of the gory destroyers of my country shouldst thou have offered me these base carnal lures which in any I deride and spit upon! Fiend, depart! Know'st thou not that I have vowed myself as purely to chastity, in life and death, as the lilies, to the Virgin Mother of God?"

"At thy youthful years, with all thy beauty—for beautiful thou art as the gleam of the sword?" returned the English knight. "But this wildness joys me well: it was thy daring and defying spirit that pleased me first! Never has my soul found aught congenial or alluring in the faint, low-thoughted women who crossed my path with invitation. In what can thy bronzed fierceness compare with the courtly charms of Melusine de Commercy? And yet she is

nought to me, and thou—yes, thou art, meseems, too much—all! But strife was ever my delight, and even when a boy I loved rather to battle with the rough wave than to glide on the smooth one! I am of few words and those ill-spoken, yet I love thee as the lion loves his mate: wilt thou be mine?"

"Good Friar Richard, thou didst warn me of grievous temptations that might assail my faith and integrity, and there come but mockeries!" said Jeanne, turning her head disdainfully away.

"For whom dost thou mistake me, maiden? By Heaven and all its saints, I am Sir John Fastolfe, lieutenant of Champagne and Brie!" exclaimed the knight, vehemently.

"Be it even so, I do not the less, but the more, despise and loathe thee, and spurn thine offers. But only the edge of a sword can speak my soul!" replied Jeanne.

"The sword! Surely thou jestest, girl, or ravest madness!" said Sir John Fastolfe. "Dost thou speak of battling with one whom the flower of earthly knighthood hold an honoured brother, who has bent the mighty Bastard of Orleans in his saddle and dashed the surly Richemont to the ground with one and the same stroke? Or wouldst thou teach me a gentle violence to spare thy maiden scruples? But so would I have it: Bedford should not suspect his chosen lieutenant of such boyish folly as loving a wench of thy degree. I come to lead thee a prisoner to my castle of Commercy, as one spreading seditious pratings against King Henry of France and England. Thy kinsfolk and the rude louts of this country need know no more, but never had a wild hawk so rich a mew to tame in, such golden bells on her jesses, as I will have prepared for thee!"

"Avaunt!—if there be power in holy signs, I command thee, in the name of Him who died on the cross, to depart!" was the reply of the unshaken ordealist.

"Nay, then thou shalt see and feel that I am of human flesh and sinews!" returned the knight, playfully. "We are alone, my fierce loveliness! my soldiers guard the village, and all its gossipers are at a distance. I am a soldier, and have spent many a night ere now beneath a coarser coverlet than this moony sky. Wilt thou force me to seize on the rebel to my king, or mount the crupper of my steed quietly and depart with only such shows of resistance as beseem thy feigned ill estate?"

"I must call for aid, then, where it will not fail me; think not thou dost shake my heart by but one quicker throb!" returned Jeanne. "I warn thee, if indeed thou art what thou seemest, depart at once in peace, or ——"

"Thou wilt call the spirits of the Tree to thine aid, the fiends whom brainless rustics assert to be thy company here?" said the knight, mockingly.

"No, but the angels of heaven, whose glorious legions will descend to battle on my side, if need be!" returned the noble enthusiast. "The radiance of their arms will stream like lightning in thine eyes and blind their baleful glare! Help! Mother! if indeed I am thy chosen instrument."

Fastolfe was making a movement to alight from his steed when these words struck his ear; but suddenly so hideous and dissonant an uproar pealed around, that he paused in dismay. His own hair and the mane of his steed alike bristled up, when his distended eyes became as it were crowded with horrible apparitions that came thronging in legions round the haunted tree. Terror, no doubt, infinitely multiplied their number, but it seemed to the aghast and petrified beholder as if myriads of fiendish forms filled every point of view. The rocks seemed to crawl with them, the plain to be darkened with their hurrying, scudding masses—the air to be peopled with shapeless spectres—an effect perhaps produced by the dismal phantasmata of the superstition of the age suddenly evoked in his memory, or by the glare and smoke of the torches which the figures waved over their heads. Amidst them came one adorned with all the attributes assigned by the middle ages to the Father of Evil himself—the horned head, the flaming eyes, the goat's legs and hoofs, the pitchfork, and serpent tail coiled round the waist. And the weird women of the Tree did indeed seem to appear in the shape of three fearful-looking hags that glided, apparently, from the earth beneath it.

Fastolfe's blood curdled in his veins, and horse and rider stood fixed like a centaur of bronze beneath the rocks of the fountain. It is probable he expected nothing less than to be torn to pieces by the fiendish claws that brandished the torches. But some power seemed to compel them to halt in a broad circle round the shadow of the tree. Fastolfe scarcely knew whether the phantoms spoke in reality in a kind of metrical jargon, or that their uncouth, screeching utterances shaped ideas by magic pressure in his brain. But what he heard afterwards recurred to him at intervals in some such jangle as the following:—

THE FIEND.

Sisters, pause!—pause, all our crew!
Scent ye not the holy dew?
A mightier spell than ours is here,
Maiden, listen, but not fear!
Gather round the charmed ground;
Weave the spell of powerful hell.
And let the sisters of the Tree
Offer all we bring to thee,
To win thee from the foolish plight
Thou mak'st to Heaven and woe to-night

A WITCH (offering a zone).

Lo, all the rich delights of love,
With this golden girdle prove!
Break the oath thy madness swore,
Which beauty never truly kept,
And kings and knights shall kneel before
The charms that else must fade unwept
Into the wormy tomb!
Children, with wealth and honours blest,
Shall draw their life-streams from thy breast,
And wreath thee with their bloom!
Else unlamented shalt thou pass
Like a shadow o'er a glass.

THE FIEND.

And vainly as the sun-smirched snow
That melts and blackens in its flow.

SECOND WITCH.

My sister offers fair, but I
Have nobler gifts to please thine eye:
Take this sceptre, and the earth
Shall yield thee all it owns of worth.

THE FIEND.

And what avails with toil and pain
To win an unsubstantial gain?
Be ours, not theirs, and wealthier prayers
Are thine without the toil and strain.

THIRD WITCH.

Nay, that is mine, Black King, not thine!
This gold net purse hath this for curse,
That sooner shalt thou drain the sea,
Than its unbounded liberality!

THE FIEND.

Take the gifts, and leave thy saints;
What gained they but bitter plaints?
Look in the fountain; see thy fate,
Alone, abandoned, desolate?

"Fiend, thou liest! it is not so! Jeanne d'Arc, fly with me—leave this accursed Sabbath! Deny their gifts—spit in the face of the fiend—fly with me!" said Fastolfe, his words breaking from his breast like the suffocating shriek of a drowning mariner.

"Begone! I fear and hate them less than thee," replied Jeanne, with as serene a confidence as if she witnessed what she herself knew to be an illusion, which was not at all the case. But the sounds of his voice for the first time attracted the notice of the fiendish company to the uninvited spectator of their orgies. A universal uproar arose, and it seemed to Fastolfe as if immense serpents of flame flew hissing and darting around him from the torches of the demon tempters. All that followed was a chaos of hideous sounds and sights, in which he afterwards remembered that he called aloud in agony to God and St. George for aid, and that a figure bearing the attributes ascribed to the warlike archangels of middle-age mythology—in glittering armour and vast wings—descended among the yelling groups, and seemed to flourish his long lance in his behalf and protection. The Dragon Knight remembered nothing more until he awoke as it were from a dream, and found himself entering the village of Domremy, on a steed whose hoofs flashed fire with every stroke of its mad velocity. In this manner he passed the church and its ferocious guardsmen, merely waving his arm, and shrieking "Follow! follow to Commercy!", and almost instantly disappeared. But his ghastly wild glare, the terror audible in his tones, and the fearful hints already furnished to the imagination of the soldiery, produced an appalling effect. Without

any observance of discipline, or even awaiting their chief's command, the Skinners of Franquet d'Arras abandoned their posts, set spurs to their horses, and cleared the village of their presence, as if a whirlwind had suddenly risen and borne them away.

"He has seen the fiends at work; they have torn my lamb to pieces," exclaimed Isabelle Romée, in heart-rending tones of despair, while Durand and her sons raised Jacob from the floor of the church, where he had fallen insensible.

"It is far more likely the fierce knight has slain her, for I know she would resist capture to the death," said Durand, and with this idea, he endeavoured to console the father as soon as he recovered sufficient sense to understand him.

"No, no; the fiends have taken their prey; but let us see if some poor bleeding shreds remain;" said Jacob d'Arc. "If none will go with me, I will go alone; give me way, sirs, I will not be withheld."

And breaking from the grasp in which his friends endeavoured to detain him, Jacob d'Arc made his way out of the church. Luckily at this moment the clock in the belfry tolled midnight, the hour when the ordeal was to be completed, and in which the villagers had promised to seek Jeanne at the Tree. Those who dared to remember the pledge, took heart of grace, and followed in the steps of the distracted father of the ordealist.

On approaching the haunted district, the general alarm was abated by the silence and tranquillity that seemed to reign over the whole scene. The moon was also shining with great brilliancy, so that the terrors of darkness were no longer added to those of superstition. Jacob d'Arc was considerably in advance of the whole throng, and as he approached the Fairy Tree, shrieking rather than calling his daughter's name, her voice was heard replying in faint startled tones, "Father, is it thou, indeed?—I am here!"

"My child, my Jeanne! it is false, it is false! the fiends have had no power over her!" exclaimed Jacob, folding his recovered child in his arms with suffocating sobs. "O, my child, return to thy father's house, do not break thy mother's heart—let us be happy once again, my child!—I knew not how I loved thee until now."

"Methought my temptings from the fiend were over, but this is the worst—or art thou indeed mine ancient sire?" said Jeanne, somewhat wildly.

"I am, I am. But say thou hast triumphed over the fiends that persecuted thee, my Jeanne; that thou wilt not leave thy father's gray hairs to anguish and to shame?" continued the old man, actually sinking on his knees before his child in the distraction of his love and fear.

"Now do I know this is a new temptation of the fiend; the worst, the hardest of all!" said Jeanne, turning from the piteous spectacle and staring wildly and yet defyingly around.

Numerous voices hastened to assure her of the reality of all she beheld, until at length, as if yielding to a conviction that came over her, tears rushed to her eyes, and she replied with a deep stifled sigh, "I must do as God commands; but rest content, dear father, Jeanne

d'Arc shall live to comfort thine age; at least, thy dying eyes shall bless me."

"But if thou yieldest to thy tempters, my curse go with thee through all eternity!" exclaimed Jacob d'Arc, and his daughter shuddered as if a blast of lightning had passed her, but she answered with much outward calmness, "I have baffled my tempters; they fled from my scorn as the dry grass before a whirlwind."

"They did, indeed: what magic didst thou use to affright the mighty English knight?" said Durand.

"He was a real presence, then? methought he was shadowy like the rest!" said Jeanne. "He who rules all things, rules alike spirits and men; but if this were the English knight, I have grievously offended him, and mayhap he saw more than the angelic form that rescued me. Father, he offered me something that he called, if I remember me well, love! I must leave this village with Durand, lest, indeed, this ravager come among ye!"

"Methinks he will not return at any speed," replied Durand; "but how didst thou affright him so marvellously that his eyes stared like a boiled crab's?"

"Ay, what hast thou seen, Jeanne? what has happened to thee?" said Friar Richard, who suddenly joined the group. "I have been praying for thee in the rocks above, but there was little occasion, it seems, for all was dark and quiet as a cold oven below."

"Not even to thee, father friar, not even to thee must I reveal what has passed," replied Jeanne, reverently, but most firmly. "Let it suffice that I have broken through every snare of the fiend, and that better days are coming for France! Surely I am absolved, since the fiends have had no power over me. And now let us return to Domremy, for of all things on earth I need only rest, and to-morrow I must depart with Durand."

"Thou art indeed absolved! a perpetual glory and light shalt thou prove alike to the Church and to thy native land!" returned Friar Richard. "Reverence her, my children, as a saint of God, to whom shall be granted a glory never ere now granted to woman. Blessed is the father that begot thee, the mother that bore thee, the hour and place in which thou wert born! Henceforth this obscure and lowly village is even the Bethlehem of French liberty. Whatever has been commanded, obey, Jeanne, though thou were bidden to walk into a furnace of fire. This silence itself proves how worthy thou art to be entrusted with the secrets of heaven, and the divine fragrance that breathes around proves, indeed, that with its messengers thou hast held conference."

There was in truth a marvellously sweet odour, such as the immortal amaranth on angelic brows might leave, diffused all around the spot on which Jeanne stood. These testimonials completed her triumph, and the villagers were now completely satisfied that the exorcism was successful. How or wherefore they knew not, but at the suggestion of Friar Richard, they escorted her back to Domremy with every possible mark of joy and honour.

"Supernatural courage, faith, and disinterestedness,—with these,

mountains may be moved," said Richard, when they had departed. "My part is done. Let her do hers, and France is saved, and I am the oracle of policies! I must now dismiss the brethren invisibly, lest aught should be suspected of this holy, quaint, and necessary device."

The friar took his way up the rocks to the hermitage of St. Mary, and reached it as Jeanne's joyful escort re-entered Domremy.

CHAPTER VII.

COMMERCY.

"All knowledge-search has long since given me pain,
In the depths of sensuality
Let us our raging passions still!
And with mysterious magic skill
Give to your wonders quick reality!"
Faust.—Birch's Translation.

WHILE these events occurred in Domremy, a scene of very different description was enacted in an apartment of the castle of Commercy occupied by the bishop of Beauvais and his sumptuous retinue.

Maitre Pierre Cauchon, doctor of theology, master of arts, licentiate in the canon law, counsellor of the king of England and France, bishop and count of Beauvais, was in that capacity one of the six ecclesiastical peers of France. This great prelate, who played so conspicuous a part in the dismal drama of his times, was of noble birth, but being a younger son, was destined to the church from the cradle. Whether this was his natural vocation may be doubted, but the ardour and ambition. of his character made him foremost even in pursuits of perhaps an uncongenial kind. He was renowned as one of the most learned theologians of the age, the pride and ornament of the powerful university which reared him, and whose influence raised him step by step, until it set him on a level with the princes of France. His own family had little power to aid in his elevation, and it was only by such distinguishing merits that he could hope to reach the summits his daring aspirations foreclimbed. Cauchon had by no means yet reached the loftiest pinnacles he proposed to himself, but he had gained a point where he deemed it no longer necessary to conceal the true features of his character.

It might be that ambition was the master passion in his soul, and kept all others aloof, until it was in great measure satiated: but, to the astonishment of shallow observers, the grave theologian and scholar changed, almost with his garb, into the magnificent and luxurious prince, and into another thing but little understood in those days, the laughing and mocking sceptic. An intellect naturally keen and satirical, to which all things presented themselves in a ludicrous or contemptible light, and that could not fail to detect the fallacies of scholastic theology, produced this phenomenon; but it in no wise

influenced the public conduct of the bishop of Beauvais. The haughtiest pontiff that ever sat in the Chair of St. Peter could not cherish more exalted notions of the prerogatives of his spiritual despotism than the count-bishop of Beauvais.

Perhaps Cauchon inherited a love of pleasure from his birth in the joyous land of Champagne. It was said to be in consequence of the scandal of his clerical life that the primacy of the Church of France was denied to his own intrigues and the power of his friends. A more probable reason, in that age of general dissoluteness, was the superior influence of the French party in the chapter of Rheims. The university of Paris favoured the English, and consequently Cauchon had early been distinguished as their partisan. But he failed not to avenge himself, in the most signal manner, on the prince and faction, to which he imputed his disappointment. It was the count-bishop of Beauvais who suggested and furnished the means for Sir John Fastolfe's expedition to Commercy, which had deprived Charles VII. of a powerful aid, inflicted a vital wound on his successful rival for the primacy, and cast a shadow of awe over a great tract of territory otherwise very well inclined to the cause of the French king.

Hitherto the allied invaders had agreed very well, in spite of their strong dissimilarity of character. The churchman was gay, luxurious, sceptical; the layman grave, austere in morals and character, and superstitiously devoted to what he considered the practices of religion. Restless and violent as he was by nature, the bishop had a profound disgust for the inconveniences of war, and contempt for its rude and unlettered professors, while Fastolfe's whole energies and hopes were absorbed in the attainment of military glory, or in the means of preserving it. But the easiness of their conquest prevented all occasion of concussion to these opposite qualities. Fastolfe devoted himself incessantly to strengthening and extending his position with a view to much vaster enterprizes, while the bishop rapidly surrounded himself with a congenial atmosphere, in the shape of a court that might have rivalled any under sovereign degree in Europe. Minstrels and all other professors of the science of living joyously gathered around him, and were made much more welcome than the wisest theologians.

The blind reverence in which he had been bred for the Church and its ministers prevented Fastolfe, in spite of his senses, from losing respect for the character of his ecclesiastical ally, and the submission he rendered stifled even the sentiment of rivalry natural between the orders of men to which they belonged. But this was not the case in their relations to a third party, which were still more singularly involved.

Among the advantageous results of the surprise of Commercy, not the least agreeable was to be reckoned the capture of the Baroness Melusine, known by the title of its heiress. The grief which this event must occasion to his triumphant rival, her uncle, the archbishop of Rheims, was in itself a great gratification to Cauchon. Her ransom was the chief available means for repayment of the large sums he had advanced on the expedition, and discharge of the recompence due to the mercenaries engaged under his standard. But circum-

stances suggested a still more exquisite revenge and triumph to the count-bishop of Beauvais. The beauty, coquetry, and rash temperament of the heiress of Commercy stirred in him a strong inclination to show to the primate of France that he was not unworthy of the ecclesiastical censures he had repeatedly passed upon him. Moreover, the very obvious and passionate preference taken by the young beauty for her warlike captor roused the dormant sentiment of rivalry in the priest.

The baroness of Commercy was richly endowed with charms of the kind most likely to attract and rivet the attention of so metaphysical a sensualist as the count-bishop of Beauvais. Her wayward, capricious, lively disposition revealed the spoiled child of fortune, while the vehemence and suddenness of her passions perpetually stimulated curiosity and interest. She was very beautiful, and in a novel style, being what may be called a dark blonde, for her skin was so brightly coloured in the cheeks and lips, her eyes and hair so brilliantly black, that the rest of her complexion seemed fair, although it was in reality tinted with the sultry hues of a ripe peach. But what chiefly stimulated the hopes and purposes of the count-bishop was the fact that, while Melusine betrayed in a thousand ways a passion for her victorious captor, Fastolfe showed but very slight signs of returning it.

Whether it was the coldness of his character, or the austere principles of chivalrous honour that governed him, or an absence of that indescribable sympathy which kindles passion, Fastolfe seemed pained rather than flattered by the preference of his youthful prisoner. He shunned her society as much as civility permitted, while the bishop sought it on every occasion, and exhausted ingenuity and taste in artifices to give her pleasure. Fastolfe was even desirous of restoring the captive to her friends, without ransom, considering that he had done her mischief enough in dispossessing her of her territory. But his ally strenuously refused assent, on the ground that his mercenaries calculated on the lady's ransom for their pay, and would mutiny if deprived of the expectation.

This coldness and repulse on one side, warmth and the indignation of despised beauty on the other, encouraged Cauchon's designs. Passions were roused that needed food, and found none. A womanly instinct,—this time vainly suggestive—and her natural coquetry, prompted Melusine to endeavour to kindle a feeling of emulation in Fastolfe, by the prodigal gaiety of her intercourse with Cauchon. It only moved the distrust and perhaps disdain of his haughty and severe judgment, while it added stimulants to the motives of the sensual and revengeful prelate.

Matters were in this state when the singular rencontre with Jeanne d'Arc furnished Cauchon with powerful levers of action. His sagacity easily detected the extraordinary effect produced by the boldness and energy of Jeanne's character on the kindred nature of the English knight. He artfully intertwisted the novel sentiment roused in Fastolfe's heart with its more habitual passions; and yet he had need to use all the influence of his twofold character of priest and politician in persuading him to resolve on the arrest of the daring

peasant girl. The danger of suffering rebellious demeanour in one of a class which, however despised, had proved itself capable of effecting great mischiefs when fairly roused, finally induced the lieutenant of Champagne and Brie to consent to her seizure, and Wulfstan of Warbois was dispatched with his archers on the enterprise—with what result has been previously detailed.

It may be imagined that the disappointment was severe to both the allies; but the singular reasons announced for the failure produced a remarkably opposite effect upon them. The knight was struck with superstitious dread and doubt, the prelate with scornful incredulity and anger. He declared that the proposed ordeal was merely the artifice of an impudent monk-errant to shield a criminal from just punishment, perhaps even of an emissary of the Dauphin, willing to promote his cause by false miracles and prophetic ravings. On the other hand, he could scarcely forbear from laughter when Wulfstan penitentially confessed the matrimonial project with which he had interlarded his commission, and thereby roused his lord's resentment to a most unusual outburst.

Cauchon was secretly pleased with the violence of the feeling betrayed by his rival and ally on this occasion. Nor did he at all interfere to prevent the punishment inflicted by the knight on his vassal, whom he ordered into close confinement, and threatened to deprive of his military rank and office of verdurer. The honesty and attachment of Wulfstan to his lord was vaguely disliked by the bishop, and he refused the absolution to ask which was the occasion of the verdurer's self-accusation. Wulfstan's own deep superstition had been sufficiently roused by his experiences in the attempt to select a wife to his bosom in Domremy. But that was not all. Every one of his comrades had gathered a different and alarming account of her in the village, and all united together, made this refusal by far the most afflicting part of the verdurer's punishment.

Still in all the accounts there was something that strongly attracted while it repelled the interest of the Dragon Knight. The prelate's authority overruled the terrors suggested by an imagination fraught with superstitions more vivid and impressive to the northern fancy than any the product of sunnier lands. Cauchon prevailed with no great difficulty in making his colleague believe that it was necessary to vindicate his insulted authority in person. It is true that the English soldiery sided with their captain, the verdurer, and almost openly refused to venture again into the bewitched village of Domremy. But the reckless Skinners of Franquet d'Arras, who boasted of them that they feared neither God nor devil, volunteered on the service, with much scorn and laughter at their fearful allies. Accordingly, Fastolfe departed on his unlucky enterprise with them.

As if to console himself for the loss of this good company, the count-bishop ordered a magnificent repast to be prepared after the departure, in celebration of the festival of the day. He invited the beautiful prisoner to this banquet, in a message full of gallantry and gaiety, and in which no mention was made that Fastolfe would be absent. A canon, called Perrinet Leclerc, whom he had raised to that dignity

in his chapter, because he was denied holy orders by the primate of Rheims, was sent on the errand, and returned with a vivacious acceptance of the invitation.

The count-bishop was seated in a large and very handsome chamber of the suite he occupied in the castle of Commercy. It was hung with his own movable tapestry, and exhibited no sacerdotal prudery in the choice of subjects for the embroiderer's art, though all professedly scriptural. Adam and Eve in paradise, Joseph and the wife of Potiphar, Sarah and the Elders, Esther and King Ahasuerus, were represented with great freedom in the four gorgeous woofs adorning the walls, while the massive framework supporting them were ancient wood carvings belonging to the see of Beauvais, representing every variety of fiend and serpent twisting and turning among figures of martyrs, skeletons, and innumerable emblazonments of the arms of the bishopric.

Preparations were made for a banquet of remarkable splendour. The floor was strewn with odoriferous rushes, and an unusual luxury appeared in the shape of a rich Persian carpet that decked the centre. The plate displayed in profusion on the table and buffets revealed, in its peculiar form and design, some connection with ecclesiastical uses, especially the twelve massive silver candelabra, each representing an apostle. There was little to distinguish the festal preparations in other respects from those of a great secular prince of high rank, if we except some shaven crowns appearing among the attendance of richly-dressed pages and servitors, jesters in motley, musicians and minstrels. Even those grave dignitaries had evidently decked their robes of office as gaily as the laws of clerical costume would permit.

Ornate and elegant Cauchon usually was in his dress, but on this occasion he displayed the magnificence of his united offices to an unusual degree. A stole of the richest purple deeply embroidered with gold and emblazoned with the quarterings of his own arms and the keys of Beauvais, in the angles of a cross raised in precious stones, partly covered a robe of the most beautifully-wrought silver lace. An ermine mantle, a fur appropriated to the highest dignities, descended to his feet, and his episcopal bonnet was ringed with the jewelled wreath of a peer of France. Musk and frankincence exhaled from his rich robes whenever he stirred, and the signets of various high offices sparkled on his finger in the light of a cedar fire before which he was seated in deep meditation, until the canon returned with the heiress of Commercy's assent to share the feast.

A flush of hope and triumph overspread the wonted sallow hues of Cauchon's complexion, and even his sharp-cut, large features, lit by the expression of the brilliant eye, became almost handsome.

"It is well, it is very well!" he exclaimed, with animation. "Let all retire but the canon Leclerc: I would speak with him alone."

The prelate waved his hand to his attendants, who instantly glided out of the chamber in a noiseless, churchmanlike manner.

"We are alone, messire," said the canon, in a humble, cajoling, and yet familiar manner, that seemed to displease the haughty prelate.

"I am alone, with thee, Leclerc!" he replied, in a tone that abashed his would-be intimate. "I have some commands to give thee, not meant for every ear—that is all! I think I have discerned in thee a willingness and some ability to do me service. None of my household sup with me to-night, and I would have thee specially signify so much to them by word of mouth, and to my fair guest, by placing only two chaplets of flowers on the table."

"It shall be done, my lord; but will she not instantly—will not the Lady Melusine—perceive that my lord, Sir John, is not to be present?" replied the canon.

"So I would have it; she must learn that truth sooner or later, so the earlier the more time we shall have to soften the disappointment," said Cauchon, with a tart, inward smile. "But tell me, do these robes of estate become me, or think you I should rather don a secular garb?"

"Nay, my lord, since you have a daughter of Eve for your guest; 'tis said they still cherish an inclination after the forbidden, and it was the apple-rind tempted Eve, for the fruit itself was bitter," returned the canon, Perrinet Leclerc.

"Nay, canon, my lady baroness regards me as a dreaming pedant of the schools, a safe foil to practise her pretty arms withal, but, perchance, the sport is more dangerous than she deems!" said the count-bishop.

"Fishing for eels and catching vipers is dangerous sport, even in holy water," said the canon, humorously.

"Thou hast jests, but there are clerks who would deem thee cheap of the flames for some of them!" replied Cauchon, wrinkling his brows. "But, again, dost thou not think she will be rarely disappointed when she finds the sulky islander not here?"

"And fear you not to encounter her so, my reverend lord, for women's passions are insensate, and know no respect of persons?" said Leclerc, with a cunning leer.

The prelate smiled his face into sharp angles in the effort not to let it appear that he smiled at all.

"Let her do her worst, we will confide in the saints, and fear not!" he said: "and we will soothe her vexation with what means we reasonably can. Leclerc, you shall be my cupbearer, for the nonce, and fill the cups with my choicest wines, taking care that the lady of Commercy no sooner sips than thy replenishing hand quietly repairs the loss. Sorrow is of dry, unobservant mood."

"I will serve her as Ganymede served Minerva, that day she lost the prize of beauty, and got drunk to forget it," said the obsequious canon.

"And we must have music," continued his patron. "Remember you any lay framed to please a lover's ear, or set a damsel's cheek aglow with pleasurable blushes?"

"The minstreless, Huéline de Troye, the lady of La Trimouille that now is, devised many such," replied the worthy canon, hurriedly.

"I have heard she is a subtle mistress of her instrument, but I play on one more difficult, since all its strings must be at discord ere

I can draw forth the sweet harmony for which my soul aches," said Cauchon with unusual warmth and poeticalness of expression.

"She could indite lays on all themes, my lord, sweeter than the syrens of the world's nursery tales sung them in the depths of the treacherous sea," replied the canon. "What is the purpose to be served, for the archer shoots not well that knows not certainly his mark?"

"Trouble not for that; my counsels ask instruments, not designers," said the bishop, sternly. "I remember, methinks, at some time to have heard a lay wherein the merits of the military and clerical professions were argued in opposition, and it was debated from which order it was wisest in dame or damsel to choose a lover; and the clerks had the palm accorded them."

"Ay, and very fairly composed. 'Tis called the Lay of Huéline and Eglantine: Eglantine is Dame Agnes Sorel, with whom they say the lady of La Trimouille held a merry controversy, thus versified," replied the canon, with a gloomy laugh.

"Let the minstrels, Raymond of Marseilles and Aymon of Tours, sing it to us at banquet," continued Cauchon. "And since he of Provence boasts the southern art of tacking rhymes together suddenly, bid him put me this thesis in verse in the whistling of a blackbird."

"A thesis——of theology——in verse, my lord?" said the canon with much curiosity as he took a scroll extended to him. "Why, out and alas, 'tis the complaint of some despised lady scorned by a knight, and in very bitter railing terms."

"It is an English ballad, the substance whereof I gathered from Fastolfe, at least so I will have it introduced as a rhymed jest, by Raymond," said the count-bishop. "It may put her better on her guard, for, as thou seest, the knight praises his coy country wench to the skies, and marvellously dispraises the highborn dame that wooed him. Time will pass on light feet with these diversions; and look thou, the instant Sir John returns and has fairly caged his prey, come thou with eyes brimful of mirth, and laughter in all thy tones, to announce how the saturnine knight doth love at last, and neither great dame nor princess, but a strapping village girl that had the good sense to treat him with the contempt he merits."

"Now espy I a meaning in my task," said the canon, joyfully. "My lord, I might be fairly trusted, for I am made but to serve your pleasure—yet as you will. I doubt not the lady will learn how love, like wine, long kept, grows ripe and generous, and is to be preferred to the rough fiery vintage youth mostly spoils its palate withal."

There was something in this metaphor exceedingly offensive, at all events, to the prelate's taste.

"Master Perrinet Leclerc," he said, "I have heard that thou couldst never keep well with friend or patron for one whole moon; and I begin to believe those who told me so. But hark, she comes; it is her musical footfall! Look that thou merit pardon by dexterous obedience."

Preceded by the bishop's seneschal, and escorted as became a

prisoner by two archers of his guard, the beautiful heiress of Commercy entered with a gay and bounding step. The feverish malignant eye of the canon lit with a peculiar expression as he watched the manner of his patron's pastoral greetings, and perceived that he kissed the lady's rich, pouting, scarlet-velvet lips instead of her brow. This ceremony was performed with a warmth and tenderness that could scarcely fail to excite the attention of the recipient. Accordingly, he noted a singular mixture of doubt, coquetry, disdain, and triumph in the glance with which she raised her modestly cast down eyelids as she rose from the kneeling attitude usual on receiving a prelatic benediction.

The count-bishop seemed inclined to supply, as far as lay in his twofold capacity, the attention and service of a secular host. He himself handed the captive lady to a seat opposite his own, richly wrought, and, in fact, the chair of state, or throne of his bishoprick. It is probable that Cauchon remarked, with but dubious satisfaction, the pains she had taken to adorn her charms, but his gaze dwelt upon her with an expression that mingled blushes with her smiles, and laughing denials of the enthusiastic compliments showered by her host as he bade her welcome. "And now, bright lady," he continued, "will it please you to wear one of these wreaths, as sovereign of all loveliness, and I will don the other instead of this ugly forked cap and its leaden weight of gold, which presses like a mountain of care on the brow."

This turned the fair guest's attention in the direction desired by Cauchon. "Methinks the chaplets should be of poppies, my lord," she replied, "if it be true that 'tis a forgetful flower, since you have provided none for my kind jailer, your glorious friend and ally."

"He will not feast with us; he is busied abroad on his policies," said the bishop with as much indifference as he could assume, but watching her intently. "You remember yonder bold, handsome country wench, that defended the stag that day when death seemed to threaten me in your company, and had thereby lost all terror, sweet Melusine?—Doubtless, Sir John hath learned some further matter against her, since he breaks the plight he gave to you of her pardon, and has taken a swoop to her village with intent to seize and bring her to Commercy. Or it pleaseth him, for I wot well his humour was ever so, to subdue that haughty and defying spirit to his will, as it doth a skilful rider to master a steed of subtlety and fiery mettle."

Cauchon had calculated in his own favour on the reaction of the lady's disappointed feelings, but so deep and cold a shadow came over the flush of her beauty, that he feared the spell was too powerfully wrought. A vivid and bright expression of indignation, however, almost instantly lighted up her countenance, and he resumed courage.

"Then is Sir John an unknightly knight and a cruel, to grant a lady a boon, and keep it only within ken!" she said, with pettish wrath. "But what matters? Since his absence is so caused, methinks we can keep our Lady's feast without him."

The brilliant playfulness of the glance she cast at Cauchon, as if to reassure herself that her charms had not lost all power, was recipro

cated with a fervour of meaning that startled even the youthful French coquette.

"Certes, and men's humours must needs vary to keep the world in motion," said Cauchon, gaily. "Uncover, and let us feast indeed while we may, for life is too short, and hurried on its way, not to grasp at every passing joy."

"There is nothing firm and lasting, my lord, but the waves of the sea and the love of woman," said the canon, pleasantly smiling, and the servitors hastened to obey their lord's command.

The ministers of the count-bishop's luxury had surpassed themselves on this occasion, and only the ecclesiastical style of the ornamental pastries and jellies betrayed the education of the cook.

"I have commanded my sergeant of the kitchen to exhaust his art to-day," continued the prelate, who had by no means exhausted his own. "For, alas, this may be the last banquet I shall share with joyance,—the last illumined by the sun of your charms among us, georgeous Melusine! Maitre Jacques Cœur, the king's argentier, has arrived in Vaucouleurs with good offers for your ransom from my lord, your uncle, that may content our mutinous soldiery, and Sir John is willing to part with you on none, being content, he says, with riving from you your noble patrimony of Commercy."

"A generous, a kind, a most generous knight," said Melusine, biting her lips while tears started in her eyes in spite of all efforts to suppress them. "But pray ye at what price do your soldiery value me? I trust it is at one to make me proud, for the argentier, they say, has discovered the art of making gold, and 'tis but to ask of him and have."

"Nay, his magic coffers, too, are at a low ebb," said Cauchon. "I trust me well," he continued, in a voice of the most insinuating tenderness, "he shall not have the means to buy thee, even at my soldiers' price; at mine, not all the treasures of the earth should barter thy loveliness!"

Melusine smiled coquettishly, and the contrast so artfully raised, suggested itself with the most painful vividness to her fancy. It produced the effect devised by the subtle metaphysician with whom she had to deal, and she turned the arms of her beauty and coquetry upon him in a kind of self-defence. The gaiety and wit of Cauchon never shone with greater brilliancy than in this encounter, which was prolonged during the repast. Meanwhile a band of skilful musicians, posted in a neighbouring gallery, continued a light and tender music, so soft as not to interrupt, but rather to seem an accompaniment to the conversation. The canon, officiating as butler, kept dexterously and unobservedly filling the lady's goblet as often as, in compliance with the frequent challenges of her entertainer, she raised it to her lips.

The lay of Huéline and Eglantine followed in due course, the satirical moral of which appeared to be, that a wise dame should prefer a clerk to a knight, in love. But the laughing eyes and deepening crimson of Melusine's cheeks confessed that she interpreted the meaning of the selection, even if she could have mistaken the

glowing language in Cauchon's gaze. "Most wisely was the judgment given against bone and brawn," he exclaimed, at the conclusion. "Only men of soul and wit know how to love; and which of these heavy man-slayers have either? Moreover, with us the boaster's tongue needs not be dreaded, our order being jealous as women of its outward seeming, and with as good cause, since the shadow is as essentially our substance as yours. But hark what even the demure and stately Fastolfe put into a rude ballad against the ladies of France."

This said ballad, the pretended translation of Raymond of Marseilles, from a rude original, was then sung, and formed a pithy commentary on the text.

It was, indeed, well calculated to kindle the indignation of so haughty and rash-tempered a beauty and woman as the Baroness Melusine of Commercy. A song of exultation and scorn, in which the knight of England was made to express his scorn for the women of conquered France, and describe the contempt and aversion he had vainly shown to one of her proudest and noblest daughters, who continued to make him the object of her unwelcome pursuit and tenderness, while he had devoted himself to the less facile charms of a peasant girl. So worded was this malicious chanson, that Melusine could scarcely affect to conceal her consciousness that she herself was its despised heroine. She dared not raise her eyes to encounter the keen, sarcastic scrutiny she felt fixed upon her, and meanwhile a multitude of passions worked like ravening fire in her bosom. Not a shade of the thoughts that crossed her face, like the clouds of a tempest, escaped the subtle observation of Cauchon. Finally, she heard him tell the canon, in a loud tone, to bring him word when Sir John Fastolfe returned with his "rural love," and suddenly, as if by magic, Melusine found herself alone with the count-bishop.

The next moment he was kneeling at her feet; her hand was seized and covered with caresses, and ere she could disengage it, the unworthy prelate had poured forth so passionate an avowal of his love, that he himself was astonished at the eloquence lent by the first powerful feeling of the kind he had ever yielded to. The evil harmony his subtlety had projected was in full movement. Love, revenge, despair, jealousy, were all at work in the noble damsel's bosom. And, truth to confess, she was lending but too greedy an ear to those enrapturing sounds of praise and passion—she was yielding but too obviously to the audacious fervour with which Cauchon kissed the flooding tears from her cheek,—when the door burst open as if with the stroke of a thunderbolt, and Sir John Fastolfe rushed in. He was closely followed by the affrighted canon and all the bishop's attendants from the antechamber, ignorant of his purpose, but guiltily conscious of their own, expecting some fearful catastrophe, and each loudly excusing himself from any share in having occasioned it.

It is certain that Fastolfe noticed the confusion and terror of the prelate and his fair guest, for, great as were his own, he went back in amazement, when he had advanced a step into the chamber; and Melusine, awaking as if from some dream of madness, stared at him in

an agony of shame and despair. Cauchon almost immediately recovered his self-possession, though altogether uncertain of the cause of this strange apparition. The ghastly wildness and paleness of Fastolfe's visage struck him instantly, and almost suggested the terrible idea that he might secretly love his youthful captive, and had detected his own projects of seduction. He essayed some kind of apology, spoke of a sudden faintness that had assailed the lady, looking anxiously around all the time, to discern if any help was at hand.

The first words of Fastolfe put this apprehension, at least, to rest. He took no farther notice of visible circumstances, beyond snatching up a goblet of wine, and eagerly swallowing it. "Your pardon, my lord of Beauvais," he said, still wildly; "I sought your presence because I deemed I must needs be in mortal sin, since I have seen the fiend himself with mine eyes!"

This utter indifference, as it appeared to Melusine, restored all her indignation and scorn. "Disloyal knight, yea, for you have broken a solemn promise! Where is the prisoner whose pardon you gave me, and now withhold?" she exclaimed, with tears of rage.

"How know I? Perchance in the murky caverns of hell with the fiends she consorts with," replied Fastolfe, with a delirious laugh, and tearing open his gorget as if it choked him, he sank breathlessly into a chair.

It is unnecessary, nor would it be easy, to follow him through the broken and scarcely intelligible explanation he gave of the extraordinary agitation which continued at intervals to shake him like an ague. But finally the circumstances of his adventure in the fairy land of Domremy were made sufficiently clear to fill with terror all who listened, save the incredulous theologian of Beauvais. At first he thought that Fastolfe had gone mad, or had dreamed the illusions that haunted his memory. But the arrival of Franquet d'Arras with his troops, in terrified and scattered groups, confirmed so much of the story that he began to conclude some singular imposture had been practised on the superstitious Englishman. Cauchon had too thorough a disbelief in everything spiritual to be credulous in this instance.

He concealed his opinions, of course, as little likely to be received by Fastolfe; and his natural astucity suggested that it would give the most probable means of undeceiving him to feign sharing his convictions. Perhaps he was not ill-pleased at the involuntary confirmation brought by Fastolfe himself to the imputations he had cast on him, and he declared that as Jeanne d'Arc's offences were now become those of which only ecclesiastics had cognizance, he would himself undertake her arrest and punishment. It is probable that Cauchon would have proceeded to act at once on this resolution, had not his whole disposable force been so panic-stricken or exhausted with their flight, that it was useless to demand their attendance. Consequently, he entreated Sir John to calm his fevered spirits with rest, and promised on the following day to let him see how powerless were the spirits of hell before the might of the church.

The course of this explanation, and the dreadful accusation which Fastolfe continued to urge with a species of delirium against Jeanne d'Arc, gave the Baroness of Commercy—who was now sufficiently aware of the prelate's designs on herself—some hope that Cauchon had altogether deceived her, and that the English knight's motives in effecting the seizure of her supposed rival were in reality purely political. This conviction increased her anguish when she thought of the guilty appearances into which she had been entrapped in his sight. But she had no pretence to offer excuse or apology to one who demanded none, who seemed not even to desire any, and she was compelled to remain silent, devoured by grief and indignation.

The crafty prelate clearly discerned that his true policy—almost the only one that remained to him—was to preserve a silence so likely to foment mutual suspicion and estrangement, and which was the sole covering to his own intrigues. He therefore skilfully prolonged the discussion on Fastolfe's adventure, in itself sufficiently marvellous to excite the utmost attention and wonder, and had the satisfaction to find his efforts finally crowned with success. Day broke while they were in discourse on this strange matter, which the superstition of the age rendered credible to all but the sceptical theologian himself, and Melusine affected to observe it with astonishment, making an effort at the same time to ascertain what opinion Fastolfe had formed on the equivocal appearances presented to his notice. "Noble knight, you must need rest. I pray you escort me back to my prison-chambers, since I must consider those so which but a few weeks ago were the lodgings of my state," she said, tremulously extending her hand. "I shall need the countenance of some such presence to my waiting-women, lest they suspect aught wrong in this—my late tarriance even with my lord the bishop. But I do beseech you, gentle knight, let no scandal be thought of it," she added with affected playfulness but real anguish, "for the good prelate informed me of your intention to capture the Domremy woman again, and I hoped to intercede for her with as good success as formerly. I know not wherefore, she won me strongly to her part! But since you have clearly proved her a fiend-worshipper and a sorceress, I beseech you, if you have any value for your poor prisoner, keep me henceforth under your own lock and ward, wherewith I shall be better pleased than with entire liberty. Let me be your prisoner only, my lord Sir John, until you yield me to my ransomers, for I desire never again to trouble my lord the bishop with my company!"

"You are the bishop's prisoner, lady, much more than mine," replied Fastolfe, with a stern frigidity which convinced the lady that her fears were well-founded. "Nor, methinks, can I leave you in better or more agreeable society than his; wherefore I take your hint, and for mine own part will go and pray, for I am surely made the thrall of some mighty spell!"

The Dragon Knight withdrew as he spoke, with a haste that left no possibility of further explanation, and marked a degree of indignation that on any other occasion would have been pleasing to Melusine. But now it was with emotions of unutterable shame and

anger that she found herself once more alone with the count-bishop and his favourite attendant, the canon Perrinet.

"I see well what ye have contrived and done, villanous priests!" she said, turning upon them a vehement outburst of passion that alarmed both. "I am disgraced and shamed; but I will soon convince my lord, Sir John, how causelessly. I return to my chambers, which if either of ye ever again dare to enter or approach, either I will dash myself from the windows, or Fastolfe shall take me into his protection from your treacherous hands!"

And she flung out of the festal apartment, without listening for an instant to the apologies and soothing entreaties of the prelate and his attendant.

"Canon," said the count-bishop, after a brief pause, "since she will not admit visitors to her presence, we must avail ourselves of our good brother's permission, and her own desire, to keep her carefully secluded in her apartments, until we can produce such irrefragable proofs of his preference for another—a wretched peasant girl, too—as shall be convincing even to her vanity. We will bring this sorceress hither to-morrow, and leave it to her rough beauty and the daylight to chase this foolish dream out of Fastolfe's head; for such it is, or some crafty imposture of one of those mendicant rogues who go about making false miracles, to rob country folk of their Peter-pence!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEPARTURE.

"Ha till mi tulidh!"—We return no more.—*Gaelic Song of Exile.*

Luckily for Jeanne d'Arc, or at least for France, at the very instant when her enemies were making preparations for her seizure, at Commercy, she was leaving the village where they expected to secure her, secretly intending to proceed to Vaucouleurs.

It was the unanimous opinion of the people of Domremy that Jeanne should no longer remain among them, as she was evidently an object of suspicion and persecution with their dangerous neighbours. Her father was more desirous than ever that she should remove to a distance from the excitement and peril of further concussion with the English and Burgundians, at Commercy; and he proposed to Durand Laxart with such earnestness that Jeanne should return with him immediately to Neuchâteau, that that worthy uncle could not refuse, more especially as Jeanne herself—who he possibly hoped would decline accompanying him home again to the control of his scolding wife—eagerly acquiesced in the arrangement.

It was determined that they should depart at daybreak, to get out of the reach of any further molestation, which was else not unlikely to be essayed. The better to secure this object, it was agreed, in a private consult of the D'Arc family, that Jeanne and her uncle should

go off with as little *éclat* as might be, and without revealing whither they intended to proceed. The small bundle of necessaries she had brought with her resumed its place on Durand's gisarme; his provision-wallets were again filled by the cares of Isabel Romée; and after a very brief period of repose, and a substantial breakfast, to which great justice was done at least by one of the travellers, the parting moment arrived.

It had been resolved that, to elude observation as much as possible, none of the family should accompany Jeanne and her uncle beyond the threshold of the house of Jacob d'Arc; and accordingly it was there that the destined deliverer of France bade an eternal adieu to the occupations and society of her childhood.

It was a bright, clear morning, and the whole rural landscape visible from this point smiled all over with fresh sparkling dews, like the tearful glee of a newly-awakened child. Durand, who had a quiet conviction that his niece was not in her right mind, found some confirmation of this theory in the strange brooding gaze which she fixed on the commonest household objects around her, and on the scene before her, of which he thought she must have long before noted every particular.

In compliance with her mother's entreaties, Jeanne partook of the bread and new milk set before her; and the poor old woman remarked, with a bitter pang at heart, that as she ate, and strove to speak cheerfully of returning, tears flowed incessantly from her eyes, and mingled both with her food and beverage.

Jacob d'Arc meanwhile hurried the preparations with his wonted sternness and impatience; though he felt a secret unwillingness, and strove to act as if nothing unusual or of special importance was at hand. He refused his sons permission to escort Jeanne to a distance from the village, saying that it was a fine day for the plough, and that they must not lose it. And he even preserved his natural austerity so far, that when his daughter, in a faltering voice, entreated his blessing on her journey, he replied, "A blessing or a curse, as thou obeyest me or not, be upon thy head!" And she bowed as if some weight pressed it down on her bosom. But, a moment after, she rose with something of majesty and grandeur in her look, that surprised all who beheld her, like a tall tree from the bend of a strong wind. And then, after an affectionate embrace of her sister, and a more lingering and weeping moment in her mother's arms, she followed Durand forth.

In passing down the village, it was afterwards remembered, she looked back repeatedly, as if loth to go. Durand remarked how attentively she surveyed the objects around her, familiar as all were to her. The old curate was at his garden-gate, and she saluted him with reverence, and her kinsman was much vexed to hear her say, as if her visions still haunted her, "Were you not a Burgundian, father, I would ask your blessing, but when you hear more you would think I had stolen it."

"Go, in God's name, nevertheless," replied Dom Joffrid, peevishly, "for we are well quit of you at any price."

A little farther on they encountered two old women, Jeanne's godmothers, who were going to Jacob's house to learn the news. "You will get us the name of witches for being your mother's gossips, Jeanne," said one, "and 'tis an ill turn for a good turn."

"Nay, you shall win a better name, or shall soon be cleared of that reproach, my mothers," said Jeanne, with a placid, but very melancholy smile; and they passed on until they reached the stream from the Fountain of the Fairies. A number of young girls were abroad with their pitchers, to procure water for household purposes, and Jeanne seemed purposely to avoid approaching them. "Why am I not like these tranquil ones?—why am I marked and singled out?" she mused aloud. "Since love may not be mine, what will avail glory and triumph? Luminous presences! what mean ye by your promises of an eternal fame, undying as the memory of men? Is life so sweet that we should endeavour to prolong its savour on the lips of time? Uncle," she added, after a pause, "'tis but turning a little from our way; I would take one last glimpse of the Fairy Tree and Fountain—for last it may well be!"

Durand was affected, he scarcely knew why, at these words, and he had, besides, a curiosity to see the place of the last night's ordeal, and if any signs marked that aught extraordinary had taken place. He made no remonstrance, and they quitted the village through the Bois Chesnu, making the best of their way to the Fairy Tree.

All, however, that Durand discerned of novelty in this scene was the exceeding freshness and glistering beauty of the foliage of the tree and grass beneath it, and the diamond clearness and brilliancy of the fountain waters. Jeanne seated herself, with the air of a traveller who rests on some long journey, among the rocks bordering the natural basin of the fountain, and looked around her with a sad and earnest gaze, as if endeavouring to fix the objects she beheld in her memory.

"These small blue thousand-flowers will comfort me when I need gentle thoughts, even as they grow in every cleft of these hard pebbles," she murmured, rising and looking into the fountain. "These waters were once my mirror: but henceforth I must array me by my shadow in brazen shields—an ill exchange!" While she spoke, a sudden expression of terror came over her countenance, which was very vividly repeated in that of Durand.

"What ails thee, child? What dost thou see but these insignificant little flower-spangles, which I marvel how ever thou didst chance to notice?" said her kinsman.

"Look into the fountain, Durand! Tell me what seest thou?" returned Jeanne, eagerly.

"Water!—and what, in the name of all the saints, should I see there—wine?" said Durand.

"Is that all? Is it but the golden hue of the light?—but that is silvery ever here—and methought I saw mine image in the fountain surrounded by lapping surges of fire!" exclaimed Jeanne. "Let us on: either I am brain-sick, or the Evil Women send yet one more affrightment to turn me from my path!"

After this intimation, certainly no want of diligence was to be observed in the motions of mine host of the Lily, and he could scarcely be induced to pause when his kinswoman gained a spot whence she knew the last view of Domremy was to be caught, and halted for the purpose. The village, the wood, the Fairy Tree, the hermitage of St. Mary, the plain of Commercy, the winding river, all were visible from the spot on which she turned, and she took a long, sorrowful survey of the whole scene. The silent pastures and the solitudes she had loved lay stretched beneath her gaze; but suddenly the whole landscape vanished in a mist of tears,—and never again did she behold it, save when some compassionate dream restored her for a few instants to the peace the stormy glories of her career denied.

When once they were out of sight of Domremy, Durand remarked that his kinswoman's footstep quickened. She reversed Antæus, and seemed to gain strength the farther she left her native soil behind. But no very long revery on this circumstance was accorded to Durand. They reached a point where two roads or tracks branched off in different directions, one leading to Vaucouleurs, the other to Neuchâteau. To the extreme surprise and no less consternation of Durand, Jeanne turned with rapid and unhesitating steps into the former.

"How now, my little madcap! That is not the way!" he exclaimed, inwardly cursing his folly in having undertaken the guidance of a personage whose head deserved the epithet bestowed on its covering.

"This is the way which the captain of the angelic host, St. Michael himself, bade me take!" she replied, turning to Durand with a look so sublimely enthusiastic and lofty that he scarcely imagined he beheld the same being. "Fear not, uncle; De Baudricourt will receive us now, for so the archangel promised me. Or wilt thou desert me now that Heaven itself takes open part with me, and sends me to the rescue of our ravaged country?"

"What!—you saw an angel—an archangel, last night at the ordeal?" exclaimed Durand, with an involuntary credulity, for which he could not account.

"Yea, yea—and who warned me that my flight would be interrupted if I took any other way than this to Vaucouleurs," returned Jeanne, impatiently.

"That is like enough, especially as that withered old pear, Dom Joffrid, was hanging over his gate," said Durand. "But how can I believe, or pretend to believe, in such stuff, my poor niece? They will think that my wits are no better than thine own."

"Let men think as they will: He who sends me thinks for ever, and ever the same, and men's opinions change as the sands of the sea," returned Jeanne, with a magnificent and, as it were, kindred glance upward to the skies. "But if thou needest other assurance, Durand, and findest it not in the changed speech of Robert de Baudricourt, I will peacefully return with thee to thy home again."

"Go on! If thy father and thy brothers roast me at a slow fire like a chestnut, I cannot disobey thy will, for in truth I do believe thou art inspired by God!" returned Durand, completely subjugated

by the power of her look, and yielding the first to that magic of mind which was soon to kindle a nation with inextinguishable fire.

About noonday, Jeanne d'Arc and her guide arrived in Vaucouleurs, without further adventure on the way, and, at her desire, proceeded at once to the town-house. Circumstances were, indeed, greatly altered to her advantage since they had left the town a few days previously, expelled with scorn and contumely.

Two personages of considerable importance had been engaged in conversation about her nearly the whole morning, in a chamber of the Keep of Vaucouleurs, and were anxiously expecting her arrival. They were in an armoury hung all round with the warlike accoutrements of the burgesses, who were not always considered the proper guardians of their own military gear. One was Sir Robert de Baudricourt, an aged knight, of commanding stature, but much bent by years. The other was a man of middle height, of a spare muscular person, with a keen, dark countenance, of an Oriental, or perhaps Hebrew, cast and complexion, singularly attired in a species of Persian caftan of richly-embroidered silk, with folds of fine linen round his head, resembling the eastern turban in its fashion. This latter personage was Maître Jacques Cœur, the first French financier who became renowned in that most necessary branch of administration, and who is known in history by the title of Argentier to Charles VII.

Jacques Cœur was originally a merchant, whose riches and unbounded credit among the great deposits of wealth in that age—the Jews—had raised him to the post he held in spite of the jealousy and envy of the proud nobility of France, and with little advantage to himself in the management of a ruined exchequer. Still he adhered with unshaken fidelity to the cause of Charles VII., and to this great merchant the king of France is said, during a considerable portion of his earlier reign, to have been indebted for the very means of existence. But even the fortunes of Jacques Cœur, in the popular belief so unbounded that it was currently reported he had inherited the philosopher's stone from his friend and patron, Nicolas Flamel, were now nearly exhausted, and preserved but a hollow show. But he was in Vaucouleurs at the earnest desire of the archbishop of Rheims, to lend the aid of his credit and security in negotiating the ransom of the lady of Commercy, and in endeavours to bring her captors to some reasonable terms. So far in vain.

On this occasion, however, the conversation was chiefly on the subject of the extraordinary tidings concerning Jeanne d'Arc, which had been brought to Sir Robert de Baudricourt by the celebrated cordelier, Friar Richard. This man, whose craftiness and zeal in the cause of Charles VII. were well known, and whose secret connection with the archbishop of Rheims was more than suspected, appeared in Vaucouleurs early on the morning of Jeanne's arrival, and announced it in such terms as the precursor of the most extraordinary events, that even the argentier was induced to lend some degree of expectation. Richard declared himself convinced and certain that the young girl of Domremy was in reality chosen and sent by Heaven to the deliverance of France. He exhorted Sir Robert to receive her as such, and for-

ward her in all honour and safety to the court of Charles VII., threatening him, in case of refusal, with the wrath of Heaven, of our Lady, the king, the archbishop, and his own.

What he had already seen of Jeanne d'Arc, and the information he had subsequently gathered concerning her, already disposed De Baudricourt to lend attention to this authoritative heralding. At all events, he had yielded so far to the monk's importunities that he had solemnly promised to receive and protect the girl of Domremy until he could receive orders from the court as to her ultimate disposal. The argentier had materially aided him in forming this resolution. Like all great statesmen, he was a man of imagination, and daring, and the French cause was now reduced to such desperation that to clutch at any straw of hope had become wise and sober policy.

The reception of Jeanne d'Arc in Vaucouleurs was, accordingly, in almost every respect the reverse of that which had awaited her on the former occasion. But when she came to explain her views—to declare her mission and the manner of its delivery to her—the argentier, himself a man of genius, comprehended that in truth there was a mighty possibility looming upon the else hopeless horizon of France. Every word which she spoke—every utterance of the sublime and courageous dreams that had so long haunted an imagination of extraordinary splendour, now lit to its brightest blaze by enthusiasm and hope, and clothed in a natural language of poesy which truly seemed like inspiration, increased the surprise and gratulation of Jacques Cœur. And even the formal and commonplace De Baudricourt yielded, when he found he had authority for it, to the irresistible spell of her eloquence and self-belief.

It was finally determined that Jeanne should be sent to Chinon, where the French court was then assembled, under the escort and protection of a knight, an esquire, and four men-at-arms, who eagerly volunteered to the service. Meanwhile she was placed under care of a respectable burgess of Vaucouleurs and his wife; and Durand, at the request of Jeanne d'Arc, and in an ecstasy of joy at so unexpected a success, retraced his way to Domremy with the news.

Durand felt it was very likely he should have to encounter some reproaches on the part of Jeanne's father, but he had the obstinacy of her resolution and its success to allege in his own favour. Strengthened, like his betters, by example, he began now to imagine that his niece was in reality destined to cut a great figure in the world; but he was not at all prepared for the proofs of her importance which assailed him when he arrived in Domremy, and suddenly found himself in the clutches of a band of the Skinners of Franquet d'Arras.

Jeanne and her uncle had indeed not left the road to Neuchâteau a single hour ere pursuers were upon it, who rode to the very gates of that town, and missed them merely by the circumstance that they had turned on the contrary way to Vaucouleurs. The bishop of Beauvais had arrived in Domremy attended by a powerful escort of his mercenaries, and in all the wrath which private disappointment could add to the sense of offended dignity and pride.

Not Hildebrand himself, in his most exalted moments, had notions

more despotic of the respect due to his spiritual supremacy than the sceptical theologian of Beauvais; and his wrath fairly boiled over when he found that its principal object had escaped. The concurring opinion of the affrighted villagers, and the information of the Burgundian curate, however, supported the idea that Jeanne was on her way to Neuchâteau. The swiftest riders were put on her traces, and luckily in that direction only. Meanwhile the prelate took up his head-quarters in the house of Jacob d'Arc, and overwhelmed his host and his whole family with menaces and reproaches as a recompense for the trouble he gave as a guest.

When at length it was ascertained with certainty that Jeanne's route was mistaken, Cauchon yielded to the violence of his indignation in a merciless manner. He consigned the whole village over to the ravaging researches of his marauders, ordered Jacob d'Arc and his family to be confined in one of their own cow-houses, and even allowed a cruel torture to be inflicted on the person of the old man. Under pretence of obtaining from him a true statement of the direction taken by Jeanne in her flight, but in reality in hope of extorting a good ransom from the wealthy herdsman, Franquet d'Arras had his feet plunged into a pan of sand, which he caused to be gradually heated from below. He won no information on either point, it is true, from the stubborn and avaricious father of Jeanne d'Arc; but the old man's feet were severely blistered and burned, and but for the opportune seizure of Durand Laxart, he might have had them cruelly baked to the bone.

Uncle Durand was not a man to make a martyr of himself; and as he had the excuse of considering Jeanne in a place of strength and safety, he made no hesitation in confessing to the bishop that he had escorted her to Vaucouleurs. These tidings entirely changed the face of affairs. A new series of expedients, and a master-stroke of artifice, almost instantly suggested themselves to Cauchon's subtle faculty of combination. He ordered Franquet d'Arras to collect his forces and return to Commercy, after having also satisfied himself, by a diligent search, that the presumptuous friar, who had dared to contravene his decrees, had likewise vanished from the scene. This retreat was accomplished with a loss to the inhabitants of Domremy of everything movable, or even tangible, in their dwellings,—larders, sties, sheepcotes, barns, and hen-roosts,—and with very considerable personal damage to all who ventured remonstrance. Among the latter was certainly not Durand Laxart; but yet he was so soundly bastinadoed, by order of Franquet d'Arras, as the uncle of a seditious witch and Dauphinist, that it was several weeks before he was able to return to his wife and customary avocations in Neuchâteau.

The storm soon threatened in loftier quarters, for on the following morning an English herald arrived in Vaucouleurs, to demand of its governor a safe-conduct for the bishop of Beauvais and the lieutenant of Champagne and Brie, who intended to pay him a visit in his town. The object alleged, was to make a compact regarding the jurisdiction of the surrounding countries. Neither De Baudricourt nor the argentier had any inkling about the real purposes of these two great

personages, Friar Richard having purposely concealed the circumstances of Jeanne's having so grievously excited their displeasure. The argentier earnestly desired an opportunity of urging the object of his embassy in person, and De Baudricourt dared not commit so great an incivility as to refuse the offered visit.

The safe-conduct was despatched, and, to the very great surprise of the granters, was apparently received by the prelate and his ally within a brief distance from Vaucouleurs; for they presented it in the course of an hour at the gates, attended by a retinue, consisting exclusively of the English archers of Sir John Fastolfe. All his retainers, with the single exception of Wulfstan, who still remained in durance at Commercy, accompanied the English knight. This was at the request of Cauchon, who represented that they were less obnoxious to the country people than his own marauders.

These formidable guests were received with all the honours that fear could pay, or that were due to their exalted rank; but great indeed were the vexation and surprise of De Baudricourt, when he learned that the bishop came to claim Jeanne d'Arc as a fugitive accused of sorcery and heresy, and that Fastolfe was with him to support the charge and the claim.

The governor of Vaucouleurs had little doubt that anger at the mission announced by the girl of Domremy was the real reason of the peremptory application made to him to surrender her to the spiritual jurisdiction of the bishop of Beauvais. His faith and honour—perhaps even his interest—were concerned in refusing submission; but he stood in great dread of the power and military fame of Fastolfe and his ally.

Jacques Cœur was, however, present at the interview, and though it was undoubtedly both his purpose and desire to conciliate the favour of the captors of the lady of Commercy, he aided De Baudricourt in his resistance to the demand. He represented that the bishop of Beauvais had no jurisdiction in the diocese of Toul, to which Domremy belonged; excused Jeanne as an ignorant country girl; and declared that the governor of Vaucouleurs could not, without dishonour, surrender to enemies a subject of the king of France, who had taken refuge in a city belonging to him. But even the politic and generous argentier was shaken when Fastolfe eagerly offered to resign his share in the ransom of the Lady Melusine, provided Jeanne d'Arc was yielded up.

"It will little avail, brother," said Cauchon, angrily, "since in that case I must raise my demand to a sum equal to the whole; inasmuch as my soldiers will not be satisfied with less, and will mutiny if we attempt to deprive them of what they consider the security of their pay."

"What ransom then do you demand, my lord?" said the argentier, despondingly.

"Little less than might purchase the fee simple of the archbishopric of Rheims, at present," replied the prelate, bitterly.

"Speak reasonably, my lord, and in numerals of some coin," resumed the French negotiator.

"You are a magician, they say, master argentier, having for familiars all the Jews under heaven," replied the bishop of Beauvais. "Yet, I tell you, had you the gnomes of a golden mine at your service, and could on a word furnish me with a sum to levy, victual, arm, and pay a host that might win Babylon from the soldan, you should not win from me so great a pleasure to mine enemy as the restoration of this niece of his, it seems, would prove."

Fastolfe was justly angered at a resolution so imperiously announced, and for other reasons, perhaps, than merely the crossing of his own eager purpose which it contained. He himself scarcely knew what sudden junction of angry feelings so completely overpowered his discretion as to induce him to exclaim, "Ha, lord bishop, you may deceive these strangers, but cannot me; for well I know, if you had not preferred the brightness of my lady of Commercy's eyes to all the gold of France, you would ere now have yielded her to so ample and full a ransom as the archbishop offers for his fair niece!"

"How long has she been fair in your eyes, my lord Sir John?—since you failed in your charitable designs on the stalwart wench of Domremy?" replied the bishop, scoffingly, while the argentier listened with an inward conviction that all efforts to promote the objects of his embassy must needs be desperate. His hopes reverted with greater interest to the promises and extraordinary apparition of Jeanne d'Arc, and he made a dexterous attempt to renew the discord between her pursuers.

"Certes," he said, "if this girl be a sorceress, as the noble knight of England so confidently avers she is—and, in sooth, there is something of strange marvel about her—what can be easier than for my lord the bishop to exorcise the fiend out of her; that, being deserted by her familiar, she may lose courage, and wilfully submit herself to the church in his person? Until then, I hold that Sir Robert de Baudricourt cannot, without breach of his knightfy faith and allegiance, surrender her."

"Yea, let it be essayed. I pledge mine oath, that if the bishop's exorcism have any power, she will own herself to be the sorceress I have called her, and a noble soul may yet be saved," said the religious Dragon Knight; and De Baudricourt eagerly embraced a proposal that seemed likely to extricate him from his perplexity, by declaring that he would abide by the arbitration of Maitre Jacques to the death.

The Bishop of Beauvais, with all his scepticism, was of full-blown church pride, and was possessed with the highest notions of his own authority and spiritual dominion, absolute indeed in general over the minds of the vulgar.

"Well, let the young witch be brought before us," he said, scornfully. "We would learn if our brother has seen a vision or dreamed a dream, for he quaffed deeper before he went on that expedition than ever we noted him quaff before. Let her come, and we doubt not that unless her fiend be bolder than for the most part those are that inspire women and peasants, we will make her confess what

fascination this is she has cast on so noted a woman-scorner as my lord Sir John."

In compliance with this arrangement, De Baudricourt sent for Jeanne d'Arc, and for the chaplain of his keep to assist in the exorcism. The priest arrived with trembling homage before the mighty bishop, bringing a bronze bason of water, and an aspersor; and almost directly afterwards, the girl of Domremy entered, escorted by her host, his wife, and the old chevalier to whose care De Baudricourt had confided her.

Jeanne cast a glance of surprise and startled inquiry over the group, but altogether unmingled with fear of the knight and prelate in whose presence she found herself quite unexpectedly. The argentier mildly explained to her the reason of her summons, and with infinitely less trepidation than might plainly be remarked in Sir John Fastolfe—or rather with none—Jeanne professed her willingness to undergo this fresh ordeal. But there was a veiled light of wrath streaming down her eyelashes, as she cast her glance on the ground, when the prelate commenced the usual forms of an exorcism, which argued that he would not prevail, at least by fear.

Cauchon sanctified the water with which the chaplain knelt before him, dipping the tips of his fingers in it, and chanting a loud imperious formula of prayer, while the rubies that adorned them sparkled to its depths.

"Kneel, girl," he then exclaimed, observing Jeanne's undaunted demeanour with little satisfaction. "Owest thou no reverence to us, a prince of the Church and a peer of France?"

"A traitor to France, and therefore no peer! A priest to kiss the hands of women when men's eyes are turned aside, therefore no priest," replied Jeanne, alluding to a fact her rapid eye had noted on the unlucky day of the stag-hunt.

"What means the bedlamite?" said Cauchon, indignantly, but without suppressing the frown of Falstolfe and the smiles of the rest of the auditory. "Approach at least, if thy stiff knees refuse to bend, and listen while I command the evil spirit that is within thee forthwith to make confession and leave thee, under pain of eternal punishment in the world to come, if thine obstinacy still gives it harbourage, and of temporal destruction in this!" As he spoke, he threw a heavy shower of the hallowed water over the possessed one, without, however, producing any effect but to increase the stateliness and firmness of Jeanne's attitude.

"The holy dew refreshes her as the roses of Damascus rejoice in an evening shower," said the argentier, with jeering triumph.

"Rain of fire and molten lead cannot harm me until mine errand is fulfilled, much less this water, if indeed it be made holy by such hands," said Jeanne, with a rich glow of anger and enthusiasm on her brow. "But, wherefore, bishop, dost thou not rather exorcise thyself, and thy company of the fiends of treason and lust that haunt ye?"

"Ay, indeed, her fiend is a woman's one, with a marvellously saucy

prate," said the bishop, adding, as if desirous of provoking his ally, "but what errand is this thou hast to perform, which makes thee so bold in thy seditious blasphemy?"

"To raise the siege of Orleans, drive the English vultures from their prey, and crown the noble Dauphin in Rheims," replied Jeanne, sedately.

"Nay, bishop, if thou canst not exorcise her of so rebellious a fiend as this, it is because thou art thyself in mortal sin," exclaimed Fastolfe, yielding to the passion which shook his frame at these audacious words. "Yea, by cherishing an unlawful and unpriestly lust for the lady, our prisoner, whom God preserve from the taint of thy corruption, if she be not already marred."

"Thou false Englishman!—thou helmet-brained mass of steel!—or rather thou fool and doting driveller! thou liest," retorted the furious churchman. "My exorcism fails because she is no witch,—hath no sorcery but a stout frame, and the senseless liking of an idiot of brass."

But at this point the prelate's invective was suddenly cut short, and he was struck to the ground by a blow like that of a mace from the gauntleted hand of the insulted lieutenant of Champagne and Brie.

Cauchon was speedily raised, the blood flowing profusely from his nostrils, but it was only to pour forth an excommunication, the direst that had perhaps ever past episcopal lips, on the knight of England. Fastolfe was brave as the bravest in battle, but he trembled and bent beneath the spiritual wrath he had provoked like a reed in the blast. Out of the pale and protection of the church, and into the power of every evil spirit, demon, wizard, and sorceress, did the good bishop cast his friend, until he should make submission and own the falsehood of the calumny he had uttered, on his knees, before the whole diocese of Beauvais! Thither he declared his intention of instantly proceeding, vowing never to pass another night beneath the same roof with his sacrilegious assailant, and abandoning all part and care in the enterprise they had together undertaken in that country.

In this resolution Cauchon remained so unalterably fixed, that, in spite even of the entreaties of those who had little reason to desire his residence in their neighbourhood, he departed with the scant attendance of two grooms from Vaucouleurs, with the intention of gathering his valuables, and proceeding at once into Normandy. He consented, however, before he went, to accept the ransom offered as his share in the imprisoned baroness of Commercy, declaring that he did it to remove any obstacle to his immediate departure from the Brie, and to prove the wrongfulness of Fastolfe's scandalous imputations.

The Dragon Knight himself was too much stunned by the consequences of his outbreak to make any further effort to obtain possession of Jeanne d'Arc, and she was restored in triumph to her friendly asylum in Vaucouleurs. The news spread far and near, and might be considered as the commencement of that great fame which was destined to grow like the light until it filled the skies of France. All that Sir John Fastolfe seemed now capable of resolving upon was

the immediate restoration of his fair captive, and he invited the argentier to accompany him to Commercy, to receive the captive from his hands, and give the mercenaries of Beauvais a pledge for the payment of the ransom which, half savage as they were, it was thought they would accept from his unspotted faith and wealthy renown.

CHAPTER IX.

CHINON.

"Misty gray, my dear young friend, is Theory,
But green grows Life's golden tree!"

Faust.—Birch's Translation.

It was an ecclesiastic of a very different stamp to the bishop of Beauvais who, about a fortnight after the events above detailed, was listening to a narrative of them, and of their consequences, in the castle of Chinon.

Regnault de Chartres, archbishop of Rheims and chancellor of France, was a man about the middle age, of a tall and portly presence, with a handsome countenance remarkable for an expression of benevolence and dignity becoming a churchman, and mingled with a grave thoughtfulness that justified his high reputation as a statesman and councillor. He was one of the few who had adhered through all variations of fortune to the cause of Charles VII., and paid the penalty in never having yet enjoyed the slightest portion of the vast revenues attached to the primacy of France. Rheims, and indeed all Champagne saving a few inconsiderable towns and castles, was in the hands of the English, and it was not to be expected that they would suffer their bitterest enemy to use the wealth and prerogatives of the see against themselves.

Chinon was destined in the subsequent age to be the birthplace of the mad wag, Rabelais; but at this time it showed few signs of so joyous a dedication. It was the refuge of the dismayed and poverty-stricken court of the "King of Bourges," as the English ironically styled their royal antagonist, from the usual place of his residence, in the capital of Berry. Charles had advanced into Touraine to make a show of some intention of attempting the relief of the valiant but now exhausted and famished city of Orleans. The general discouragement was too complete to allow of more, and the ministers and courtiers of the dispossessed king, awaited almost with impatience the fall of the devoted city, to solve their perplexities, and enable them to take to flight, or finally desert him with the less shame.

Charles VII., himself, reduced to hopelessness and inactivity, strove to forget the approaching ruin of France, and his own, in such pleasures as poverty and fear permitted still to gather round him. The only persons having influence over his indolent and voluptuous nature, who opposed the plans of flight and abandonment in agitation,

were the too famous Agnes Sorel, his mistress, the Archbishop of Rheims, and Jacques Cœur. Nevertheless, these three individuals, in spite of the powerful kinds of influence they wielded, were scarcely able unitedly to withstand the pressure of events, and the dastardly counsels of the king's favourite minister, the Lord de la Trimouille.

It was the argentier who was now engaged in communicating to the ecclesiastical prince, the particulars alluded to at the commencement of the chapter. He was standing opposite Regnault de Chartres in a small, gloomy chamber of the castle of Chinon. Everything around betokened the poverty and despair to which the adherents of Charles VII. were reduced. The dusty, bare wooden furniture, the narrow chamber lit by a single eyelet hole, the want of all attendance and reverence to so great a dignitary as the archbishop-duke of Rheims, spoke eloquently of the universal decay.

The prelate was listening with a perturbed and agitated look to the discourse of the argentier; and not without great cause. The latter had just arrived from an unsuccessful mission to negotiate the ransom of the lady of Commercy, and brought the latest tidings from Vaucouleurs.

"Deem not that I lost any diligence, my lord," he was saying. "Impute not the blame of failure to me, most reverend messire! nor will it greatly surprise your grace, that although, according to the tenor of my joyful message, both the bishop and lieutenant had consented to my Lady of Commercy's release, though Fastolfe himself, like a generous chevalier and soldier that hath done as much harm as contents him for the time, proffered to relinquish his share of the ransom, the false fox of Beauvais dexterously managed to render the whole agreement void and of none effect."

"I doubt it but too well!—yet on what plea?" replied the archbishop, with a deep heave of the chest. "Fox, do you call him? Wolf, wolf! Oh, that the day were come when as such I might strip the shepherd's cloak from his back. But what? Sir John recalled his word?"

"Nay, messire," replied Jacques Cœur, with evident reluctance. "He held to it like a loyal and true knight, albeit a half-stunned and frighted one. He promised that if I would accompany him to Commercy, he would yield his captive to my hand,—and accompany him your Grace may well believe I did. But when we reached Commercy, we found the gates closed, the castle and all points of vantage seized, and Franquet d'Arras and his marauders in full possession of all, and in open mutiny. Yet I cannot doubt that it was by secret instruction and authority of the bishop, albeit they pretended to hold him prisoner, and openly defied us, swearing that they would rather cut the Lady Melusine to pieces, and fling us the bits, than allow her to be yielded up without full payment of all their demands. Neither by entreaty nor promise—and of both I was lavish—could those vile robbers be moved. Sir John Fastolfe had but some two score English archers with him, and the villains of Commercy laughed at his threats. There was but one Englishman left in the castle, a soldier who had committed some offence, and was in durance; his name,

methinks, was Wulfstan, and him they sent forth with a perfidious message of entreaty from the bishop, that we would attempt nothing against Commercy, since the mutineers had sworn to destroy both him and the Lady Melusine on the first effort at their rescue. On the contrary, he prayed us to relinquish a purpose which was now too obviously in vain, and expressed his hopes that he should be enabled to quiet the revolt on assurances that the baroness should remain a prisoner until the ransom demanded by the Burgundians was paid in counted money—not in the promises, it was said—of the ruined banker of a ruined monarchy."

"Villains! villains! but what ransom demanded they?" said the archbishop.

"A million liards! My lord, it also took away my breath, that have seen reckonings paid in ingots," replied the merchant-minister. "But think not of the price, for I am well convinced all the gold and jewels in the treasuries of the tale-tellers of Arabia could not purchase this lady from your foe. Ah, my good lord—but do not ask me more!"

"Let me know the worst, Jacques! let me know the worst, and at once, for methinks I could pawn my soul to get Melusine from his grasp!" exclaimed the archbishop, gazing eagerly, and with a dreadful surmise, in the face of his informant.

"On this message coming, Sir John grew so wrathful that with his few English only he would have attempted an assault on the castle, had it not been too manifestly an enterprise of madness," said the argentier; "and from what he said in his wrath, I conjectured but too well, he nothing believed in the prelate's message, and perceived in the whole a treacherous plan to render himself master of Commercy, and of my lady the prisoner's beauteous person! Ah, reverend archbishop! it too plainly appeared from Fastolfe's ravings that either your enemy has already won his hapless captive to his shameful love, or is engaged with such craft and audacity in the attempt, that he can scarcely fail!—Beseech you, my lord, be not too much moved. But seeing Sir John thus angered (who, methinks, might honourably have been seeking the lady's favour by his wrath at her detention), I offered, without warranty I own, to lend him the forces of that country and of Vaucouleurs to subdue the mutineers of Commercy. He took the proffer joyfully; but Sir Robert de Baudricourt is so timid and old, he would not listen to reason nor lend any aid. He had already done too much, he said, to embroil himself with the English, in giving a certain country wench despatch to this court, who pretended to be inspired by God against them, to hope reconciliation, and he would rather have the Norman thieves than English soldiers as neighbours, nor would hazard the weak forces he possessed in so dangerous and unfruitful an enterprise."

"We will reward him!—and she remains a prisoner in the hands of these ruffians at Commercy?" said the archbishop, clasping his hands. "God give me patience!—my only brother's only heir and child!"

"My lord, no!" replied the argentier. "Sir John flew to the

nearest English garrison, at Troyes, to obtain assistance — but, meanwhile, Franquet decamped with his rogues, the bishop, the plunder of all the open country, and the Lady Melusine, for Normandy!"

"Then she is now in the power of the licentious villain of Beauvais!" exclaimed the primate, in a tone of despair. "Would thou hadst rather brought me tidings that she had in reality been severed piecemeal! Young, rash, vain, so beautiful!—a hardened, crafty sensualist!—she is lost, and never until now had I my share in the utter ruin of France!"

"She is indeed imprisoned in the bishop's palace of Beauvais—but Fastolfe has gone to Paris, to lodge his complaint against him before the Regent. Some good may come of that!" said Jacques Cœur, soothingly. "But, my lord, have you too lost all hope of France, of vengeance, if none other remain,—when it has been strongly revived in the coldest bosoms by the heroic daring and courage of a shepherd girl?"

"Of a madwoman, of a madwoman, Jacques!—you speak of the woman who arrived with letters from Robert de Baudricourt, some two days past, and promising all manner of impossible miracles?" said the archbishop.

"Already arrived?" returned the argentier.—"Why, we who travelled with every convenience of passport and licence, are but just entered Chinon!—But a madwoman?—Has she been granted audience of the king and council?"

"Do you deem us mad too, Jacques Cœur?" said the archbishop, angrily. "Are we not already sufficiently the mockery of the world for our folly and impotence, but that we must lend ear to the ravings of a frantic peasant girl, who promises to raise the siege of Orleans, and crown the king in Rheims? She abides, I have heard, in a hostel of this city, with a knight, and some attendants, given her by the dotard of Vaucouleurs. But you remind me well! She shall quit Chinon in brief space, or be whipped out of it for an impostor and a blasphemous pretender to the power of the saints."

"I thought her so until I had seen her," replied the argentier. "I know that your grace is not of that order of men who think that Heaven chooses its instruments after the manner of kings and courtiers —for birth and degree! I have seen her—and, certes, whatever else she may be, she is no impostor! A kind of light rises and shines round her brow when she speaks!—But, Friar Richard, your faithful and industrious emissary, whom I overtook on the way, waits your good leisure below to communicate matters concerning her that may, 'tis like, move you to another opinion. Richard himself, it seems to me, is a believer in her—at least, so he represented himself to Robert de Baudricourt, threatening him with every punishment, divine and human, if he any longer refused to aid the purposes of Heaven, and send the maiden to our king!"

"Jacques, Jacques! do not tempt me! Priest as I am, I feel as if I could league with the fiend himself for vengeance or prevention of the wrongs I fear!" said the archbishop. "Let Richard come to

us! But, stay; you have yourself seen this woman, and formed a favourable opinion of her?"

"Of this at least be well assured, my lord," replied Jacques Cœur. "If she be mad, it is with a glorious insanity that might stir a nation to unheard-of deeds, and make imagination reality! Yes, I have seen her, in Vaucouleurs. It was to tear her from the protection she had there invoked that Fastolfe and the bishop came. They accused her of witchcraft and dealings with fiends and fairies, and thence but proved the power and energy of the mind whose sway they were obliged to account for as supernatural agencies! Your grace wots well I believe only in the angels and saints, and not in the demons and their dark world, deeming guilt its own sufficient punishment! Nay, if it be heresy, I recall it, assuring only that this woman cannot be aught but what is good and inspired by the breath of God!"

"Let Richard come! If she bring vengeance or the means of vengeance—but I shall speak heresy too!" exclaimed the prelate. "Tell me more of her—her parentage,—but what matters that? Tell me only what means hath she to execute such mighty enterprises?"

"Mind controls the universe!—why not our restless wriggling on this dungball of earth—as I have heard Friar Richard call it," replied the argentier, with a slight smile; but he proceeded to give so eloquent a description of the person, purposes, and demeanour of Jeanne d'Arc, that the curiosity and interest of the archbishop were evidently excited to a high degree. His own private injuries gave him also that vehemence of passion which overlooks obstacles.

"You are right, Jacques, you are right; we may at least have vengeance!" he exclaimed, at length.

"Ay, and to overflow, till the sweet draught palls even our own palates, my sacred lord!" said Friar Richard, who entered the chamber on the words. Then kneeling, and reverently crossing his arms on his breast, he continued,—"Give me your benediction hastily, my lord, or I cannot wait to receive it ere I burst out with my news, for they are the best that have been heard in Touraine since St. Bernard preached the first crusade!"

"What good news, Richard?—You have sent us a madwoman or an impostor, as if we had not enow of both already to ruin any cause!" replied the archbishop, with a mixture of contempt and curiosity indefinably compounded in his manner.

"Hear her speak, and judge if madness ever spoke so reasonably. And for impostor, I could soon convince an unbelieving Jew she is none! But we should be alone," said Friar Richard, with a glance at the argentier.

"I have no secrets—least of all those that concern matters of state—with Maître Jacques," returned the primate.

"But these are secrets that concern the church, my lord," said Richard, earnestly.

"Speak freely, cordelier; thou canst not avow more than I suspect," said Jacques Cœur. "I am no believer in miracles—in these our times, at least—thou knowest. And a woman who unites so magnificent and apt a splendour of imagination with so shepherdess

a simplicity in all mundane matters, is like enough to have been made the subject of a pious, patriotic, and most monkish trick!"

"Pardon me, then, my reverend lord and patron," said Richard, with some little nervous hesitation; "pardon me if, to essay her courage, and ascertain beyond doubt the motives that influence her, lest the church should incur the scandal of encouraging a false miracle-worker, I subjected this girl to an ordeal whence the truth came like fine gold from the furnace. The ignorance of the people in those wild countries of Bar is indeed very marvellous; and I am well assured she believed my companions of the Passion, whom I caused to perform the temptation of the blessed saint and martyr, Catherine, around her, in a holy place, at midnight, were real demons, witches, and fairies. Of this I am certain, inasmuch as the show was so well performed that it altogether bedazzled and maddened the valiant English lord, Fastolfe, who, on an evil purpose of his own, chanced to be present."

"Nay, then, it might well deceive a foolish country wench," said Regnault de Chartres. "But none the less didst thou merit punishment for so profane a use of a sacred art!—And to what intent?"

"To try her courage:—and what of human terror can appal the heart that sits firm amidst supernatural assailings? To approve her sincerity and virtue:—and what can tempt them to swerve whose strength enabled her to despise the most gorgeous offerings of wealth and ambition, rather than abandon the mission she believes assigned to her? Fastolfe himself—whose hard senses were enthralled with her noble beauty and audacity—unwittingly aided me with his carnal wooing. All in vain: her docility and faith equal her goodness. I appeared to her afterwards as the warrior angel, Michael, and instructed her in what course she was to pursue to redeem France; which so far she has fulfilled to the letter. I bade her thenceforth obey no counsel but what, by voice or presence, I gave her; and thus your reverend grace is master and director, through me, of all her future achievements."

"If aught could restore courage to our heartless hosts—to the desponding king—stir a kind of valour even in the soul of La Trimouille—reconcile our contentious nobles in some plan of unity—a supernatural leader, methinks, it fully needs," said Jacques Cœur. "And such a one, whether inspired by God or by her own great heart, this maiden seems."

Both the friar and Jacques Cœur continued to excite the curiosity and hopes of Regnault de Chartres by the details which they gave of Jeanne's character and demeanour. Above all, the archbishop was delighted with the defiance and energy she had shown in her contest with the Bishop of Beauvais, and the vexation his failure caused him. In the midst of this discourse, by a not unremarkable coincidence, a rap was heard at the door, and Friar Richard taking the message, announced that the prelate was summoned to a council to be held instantly on certain news which had arrived from Orleans.

"The city has fallen, doubtless! all is in vain," he exclaimed.

"No, Orleans has not fallen; it cannot, it shall not fall!" said the

friar, disappointedly; "unless, we reject in our pride and vainglory the aid Heaven sends to us!"

"Go, bring her from her inn to the chapel, and pray for good success; for I will obtain her audience within a brief while," replied the prelate. "But by what sign shall we persuade our hopeless king to trust in her, our haughty and insolent nobles to believe this peasant girl has a heavenly patent to be more than their equal, their superior?"

"The voice told her to 'go boldly and fear not,'" replied the crafty friar; "and that the success of her mission shall demonstrate its divine authority."

"Alas, that is too future an assurance to convince our faint and careless prince!" said the archbishop. "Jacques, I am content to believe there is indeed something about her of divine and inspired; for what says Cicero? 'Nemo unquam vir magnus fuit sine afflatu aliquo divino:' and there is your own excellent motto for encouragement, 'A vaillants cœurs rien d'impossible!'"

"Troth, then, my lord," said the argentier; "let her not fail for lack of miracles! What say you if she favour the court with a glimpse of the crown and regalia of Rheims, which I know to be in all secrecy pawned by the English to certain Hebrews of Frankfort, who, on my plighted word, would lend it?"

"It were too long to bide the sending," said the prelate musingly. "I have bethought me. Last night I chanced to overhear the king at prayers in his oratory, withdrawing me in silence, as the matter of his petition was evidently not meant for human ears. Richard, be ready with thy archangelic voice; I will send for the knight who brings her to be first examined, that thou mayst have time to instruct her under semblance of St. Michael—I have seen thee personate him marvellously well, with a sweet, sonorous voice, and good angelic discretion—what to reply in case the king demands some supernatural testimony to the truth of her mission."

"Woe betide it," said the argentier, warmly, "that men no longer believe in the potent and indisputable signs wherewith Heaven has impressed her glorious brow, nor in the heroic tears that glitter like drops of fire in her eyes when she speaks of the devastation and approaching deliverance of France!"

And thus and then was concerted the second of those pious frauds which the credulity of the age and of the imaginative country-girl rendered so possible, without in the least detracting from the glory due to her generous patriotism and devotion.

CHAPTER X.

THE ANNUNCIATION OF JEANNE D'ARC.

"Be not dismay'd, for succour is at hand:
A holy maid hither with me I bring,
Which, by a vision sent to her from Heaven,
Ordainèd is to raise this tedious siege,
And drive the English forth the bounds of France."—*Henry VI.*

THE difficulties even of a minor nature yet to be surmounted by the inexperienced and lofty dreamer, in the realization of her grand visions, may be gathered from a brief sketch of those who were to be its corporeal agents. The passions she was to disturb, the adverse influences likely to be roused, appeared in the very persons of the council assembled to debate on news of dangerous urgency from Orleans.

It was held in the hall of the castle of Chinon, an ancient chamber hung with time-effaced tapestry and rusty armour. Neglect and gloom seemed to preside over everything; the high narrow windows themselves shed a shadowy reluctant light on the scene. A long oaken table, covered only with dust, formed the council-board, at one end of which, in a chair raised two steps, and mocked with a tattered old canopy overhead, sat the dispossessed king of France. Young, eminently handsome, and with that melancholy and tender expression of countenance which easiest wins the hearts of women, Charles VII. looked a prince as ill-fitted as the lottery of chance could have cast, for his stormy and violent epoch. It almost seemed as if his royal robes and diadem were worn as a sorrowful jesting of despair, for the silver lilies were nearly indistinguishable in the dust and rents of the once violet-velvet mantle, and all the gems had disappeared from the spiked gold on his brow. A page who stood behind the chair, with a beautiful falcon on his wrist, probably bore one of the last remains of regal magnificence.

Nearest the king, on the right hand, and also in a chair somewhat elevated, was his queen, the gentle, wronged and lovingly patient, Marie d'Anjou. Pale and fair, with a tranquil sadness on her lips and brow, the princess seemed to devote her attention to a piece of embroidery which she was skilfully elaborating, while two ladies, posted on either hand, held the frame and balls of silk. Perhaps these offices were assigned them as pretexts to excuse their presence on the scene at all. One was the king's mistress, Agnes Sorel; the other the wife of the imperious minister, La Trimouille.

These ladies presented a striking contrast to each other. The lady de la Trimouille was dark in complexion, and though she had been

very beautiful, the corrosion of painful thought and suffering was visible even in her bright, sharp-edged smile. No marvel indeed was this to those who recognized in her the minstrelless, Huéline de Troye; but, on the contrary, the Lady of Beauty, as Agnes was called, as much from her personal charms as from the title of an estate the king had conferred on her, was dazzlingly fair, and in the most resplendent bloom of her too famous loveliness. She was several years younger than the queen, and much more gaily and richly attired than either her royal mistress or fellow-attendant. The latter was first lady of the bedchamber, and Agnes was first maiden of honour, to Marie d'Anjou, and she affected, or was perhaps in reality anxious, to be assiduous and respectful in the office she now fulfilled. But her frequent mistakes in furnishing a due supply of silk from the clew she held, patiently and silently rectified by the queen, the sparkle in her blue eyes, the crimson flush on her beauteous cheeks, showed with how much more interest she followed the debate of the council.

A young knight clad in complete armour, with his vizor raised, of rough, ungainly, but martial figure and countenance, was addressing the king from the opposite extremity of the council-board. His discourse was abrupt and inartificial, but energetic as the blows of a mace, and he frequently appealed in its progress to certain personages in the crimson robes and chains of magistrates, whose woe-begone looks and sobbing tones apparently bore witness to the speaker's statement. The shield on which he leaned at times, bore the arms of the royal house of Orleans, crossed by a bar-sinister. It needed not these insignia with any present to recognize the valiant bastard, Dunois, the illustrious defender of his captive brother's city, and of the last palladium of France. The persons to whom he occasionally referred as testimony were the chief magistrates of Orleans, and who by their tears and despairing looks bore it abundantly to its tale of slaughter and famine, and the hopelessness to which it was now reduced.

The duke of Alençon, a prince of the royal blood, and grand marshal of the destroyed armies of France, stood lounging opposite to the group about the queen. Tall, very fair, with long flowing locks, full, plump, and highly-coloured complexion, Alençon might with some reason consider himself handsome—which he evidently did. He was brave and fearless in battle as a French chevalier could be, and was not deficient in talents as a general; but there was evidently a strong tinge of the coxcomb in his composition. He listened with carelessness to the affecting and passionate statement of Dunois, like a gamester who knows that the stakes are lost, and witnesses out the playing of the cards; at all events, his eyes far oftener wandered over the charms of the Lady of Beauty, or dwelt on those of the royal falcon, than on anything else.

Near to this prince sat a sallow-looking personage, lean to extremity, as if his watery juices were consumed by some perpetual ravening fire of anxiety within. This was the king's chief minister, the lord de la Trimouille; a post to which he had raised himself by mingled craft and violence of the most extraordinary description. He had assisted

the fierce constable, de Richemont, in the destruction—the actual murder, though styled an execution, of the king's former favourites, the Sire de Giac and the Camus de Beaulieu. He had married the wife of the former, and completing his crimes by ingratitude, procured the constable's banishment from court. De Richemont's cruelty and arrogance made him in the highest degree distasteful to Charles, and La Trimouille, having acquired in turn an ascendancy over the king, dreaded the wrath of his fiery accomplice. In spite of all the danger and necessity of affairs, he would not suffer the constable to approach the court, and deprived him of all power but such as his own turbulence and disdain of control violently retained.

Accordingly the place of the constable of France was vacant in this important council, held on a subject the most essentially belonging to his office. Perhaps it was even in a species of derision that where he might have been supposed to sit stood a personage known in the court by the title of Prince des Sots, or Prince of Fools. Nevertheless he was a man of excellent wit, and to whom the world is indebted for the re-invention of comedy in the shape of the agreeable "sottises," or mock-moralities with which he diverted the gloom of the fallen court of France. It was in truth our old friend, Roman de la Rose, raised to the office by the patronage of the wife of La Trimouille. But the general despondency shadowed even Roman's mirthful spirit, or he conceived it due to the office of secretary which he filled for the nonce to display much gravity. Perhaps, however, there was something of satirical gaiety in the excessive humility and reverence of the attitude in which he leaned forward, tablets in hand, and caught the words of Dunois as if they came from an oracle of wisdom, and which, certes, the rude though valiant warrior never pretended to be.

The rest of the council was composed of the few great nobles who still adhered to the cause of Charles VII., or were not prisoners in England, or absent with the parliament at Poictiers. Among these were the ferocious count of Dammartin; the count of Clermont, whom Sir John Fastolfe defeated at Rouvrai; the high admiral, Culant; the marshals of St. Sevère and Raix; and the famous Gascon knight, Poton de Saintrailles, with his brother-in-arms, La Hire. The two latter were in the company of Dunois.

"And thus, my dear liege, I have revealed to you the full extremity of the danger in which we stand," said Dunois. "Our enemies have compassed us in on every hand, so that it is as if by miracle we have reached your royal presence. Famine, mightier than the swords of Englishmen, has at length subdued us. Ah, could you hear the groans and wailings of despair; could you see the ghastly countenances that glared hopelessly upon us when we departed; the glistening, hollow, maddening eyes! Sire, when soldiers like Gaucour and La Fayette, La Hire, and Saintrailles, own that further defence is hopeless, it shames me not, though it grieves my heart worse than the thrust of a rusty lance, to say it, that, unless speedy relief be sent, Orleans must yield! Must yield, for soon the walls will be unmanned; our feeble and famished soldiers can no longer bear the weight of their armour;

the citizens have long ago lost all strength, but what good-will and courage give men in desperate moments of struggle and defence."

"Saintrailles is a Gascon, and hath not even he a vaunt left to cheer us?" said Charles, with that mocking mirth sorrow so often assumes. "Well, cousin, since he is silent, all must indeed be lost. What remains but that we abridge a period of useless suffering, and bid you return at once, and surrender Orleans, on what poor terms may yet be obtained?"

"After having so long defended it with our blood, with the blood of our children!" exclaimed one of the Orleans' deputies, with inexpressible anguish and bitterness.

"A little longer indeed ye might defend it, so as to give the king good time for his escape into Dauphiny," said La Trimouille. "You can assure us at least of that, noble Bastard?"

"Escape!—the king of France escape into Dauphiny!" echoed the young warrior, with an indignation he could not conceal. "Who gives this coward counsel to our king? No, no, my liege! rather put on the panoply of your warlike ancestors, and come and perish with us as a king should, in one last glorious effort to redeem his crown and people!"

"You rave, noble Bastard," returned La Trimouille. "What French army dares now fight a stricken field with the English, much less join in so desperate an affray as this you would cajole us into? Azincourt, Verneuil, Crevant, and so lately Rouvrai, attest the mere thought to be madness and desperation! God forbid, say I! While we have the sacred person of the king still safe, we cannot deem that all is lost, and where is there refuge but in Dauphiny when Orleans falls, as fall it must?"

"Alack, and must we leave our pleasant countries of the Loire, gushing with riches and plenty, for the bleak rocks of Dauphiny?" exclaimed Charles. "Methinks, indeed, I would rather be put out of pain by an English lance at once, than pine to death amidst the freezing savageries of St. Bruno? What say you, mesdames, or may I count on your company, to warm the Alps more rosily than their sunsets for me?"

He turned as he spoke towards the queen, but his enamoured eyes sought those of Agnes Sorel.

"For my part, sire," replied the Lady of Beauty, after a slight pause, as if to give the queen the right, "for my part," she repeated, with energy, "I am like the rest of my sex, and Master Alain oft tells us in his lays, that we are only summer-birds—I shall fly towards the sun! It has been prophesied to me, that I should love and be beloved by the noblest and most victorious knight in the world, and it seems to me I must seek him in the English camp."

"Let us not bandy jests at present—this is no season," said La Trimouille, who justly dreaded the influence of the Lady of Beauty, nearly always exerted against his policy. "We have sober matter, methinks, before us."

"But, Lady of Beauty!" resumed the king, in an offended tone, "if it be true, as I have heard say, that you set such store on keeping

bright your noble father's stainless name, among the boasting, lavish-tongued English, how will you dissemble your honours, should you find a fitting mate in the cold, imperious, thrice-married Bedford himself?"

"Charlot!—I would say, my sovereign lord,"—replied Agnes, who, indeed, had an almost superstitious dread of public reproach. "At least, if I earn my vile rebukes, I can take refuge in the glory of him for whom I have sacrificed my own! The blush of shame needs not be deepened in my brow by knowing that I have won mine ignominy to pleasure a fugitive and dishonoured knight, who dares neither keep nor valorously resign his inheritance."

The queen looked up with some slight flush of indignation, but the words she might have spoken subsided into inarticulate motions on her lips when she observed the roused and passionate expression on the king's features.

"Valorously resign! that means death, on some bloody field of ruin and slaughter! Thither, then, I will go, since the Lady of Beauty sends me," he exclaimed, with great emotion. "Let us muster the last remnant of those who yet honour their king, and perish amidst the trenches of Orleans!"

"Would I were a man, with other than these coward sinews that will not obey my heart, and shiver at the din of arms unless in some gay and loving tournament!" exclaimed the fair Agnes, with enthusiastic warmth.

"In truth, thou wert a lovely warrior that would lead all men after thee," said the king, smilingly. "Truly! and a devout nun of Avignon, predicted to me that my crown should be restored to me by a woman."

"By a maiden, sire!—but she said not, of so noble a strain as Madame de Beauté!" said La Trimouille, with a pause that barbed a sarcasm felt by Agnes, to the quick. She coloured as crimsonly as Venus, when the gods laughed over Vulcan's net, let fall the ball of silk she was holding to the queen, and then hid her confusion and indignation by kneeling and reverently presenting it.

"Why not the young madwoman from Lorraine, sire, then? She purports to be a maiden from her infancy, albeit travelling alone with a knight, an esquire, and four jolly archers of Bar?" said the duke of Alençon, laughing boldly outright. "But if your highness is indeed in earnest to make one last effort to save Orleans and France, we must, as I have often urged upon your council, admit the proffered aid and presence of the constable!"

"Do I hear these words again, and from your lips, duke?" exclaimed La Trimouille. "Wherefore, then, has the king made you marshal-lieutenant of all his armies, if you are so willing to serve under another master, for such the constable, both by right of his office and of his own ferocity, will be wherever he goes!"

"Marry, sir, to speak it bluntly," replied the duke, haughtily, "for no better a reason, doubtless in your opinion, than to prevent me from protesting, as I shall to the last moment of our ruin, against the evil policy that keeps the most valiant and faithful soldier and councillor of the realm aloof from serving it!"

"Be that as it may, with my good-will, never shall the royal person of the king again be placed in the power of that ruffianly butcher and his desperadoes," replied the minister, whitening with rage.

"If you fear only for the safety of our liege, messire," retorted Alençon, "let us join the constable without him, and fight this field before Orleans. I am not, God wot, sufficiently a favourite at court to dread the vengeance my cousin of Richemont is wont to take on the false silken flatterers that mislead the king to his destruction!"

"Peace, Alençon! never will we suffer that ruthless manslayer to approach our presence again—no,—though our crown were on the point of his sword, to be restored to us, or tossed to our foes!" said Charles, with an angry vehemence unusual with him; but relapsing into the deepest dejection, he continued, "We see well, all is lost! Ye have cleft my sceptre into little wands of power divided among ye, and ye expect me now to stretch it with the concentrated might of Charlemagne's! Hearken! ye have divided my power—now share my destruction."

"The Bastard—he who now complains the loudest—may claim a good partition in that," exclaimed the count of Clermont. "If he had listened to my earnest prayers, and held back his battle until I arrived at Rouvrai, Fastolfe that night had gone to bed in the dust."

"Clermont, it is not so!" replied Dunois, fiercely. "You bade me tarry, only that you might reap my harvest of renown; for when you came, and saw what prickly weeds were in the crop, you drew back your sickle; and the day was lost to France, that Dunois might not have the praise of winning it."

"Proud Bastard, it was not so!" said the count of Clermont. "Your men were defeated, and scudding like sheep before the wolf, when my standards came in sight, and Fastolfe's men bore down upon us with the resistless shock of victory before we had time to form in array."

"'Tis false! and I will prove it with my sword against thine, in any walled space whence thou canst not flee so easily!" returned the Bastard of Orleans.

"Let it be in a saw-pit; I will meet thee, and prove my words. My liege, grant us a field!" shouted the count of Clermont.

"Is there any man will back the false Bastard? I was with Clermont at Rouvrai, and the field was lost ere we came to it," yelled the count of Dammartin, half drawing his weighty sword from the scabbard.

"Take France among ye, tigers, not men! Rend one another to pieces, and spare the leopard her toil!" exclaimed Charles, rising in a passion of indignation and grief. "Lo, I resign to ye all my part in her! Dig graves for one another wherever ye will! The rocks of Dauphiny—perhaps the cells of Bruno—are henceforth my home. England may perhaps suffer me to die there in peace; or let her slay me, if she needs my blood to swell the ocean poured by my faithful French. Here is my crown. Let him among ye who slays his

brother first, take it to Paris and lay it at the feet of Bedford and Burgundy."

There was a minute of astonished and perhaps shame-struck pause, and then tears gushed fast and thick from the eyes of the valiant Dunois.

"No, my liege, no," he said sobbingly; "be master even of mine honour. Clermont, thou hast not lied!—Dunois lost Rouvrai all alone."

"It avails nothing; your discords are but lulled for instants, and then rage the fiercer for the calm," continued Charles, despairingly. "Let all desert me. I give all full release. Nobles, soldiers, women,—my very falcon,—let all to Paris with their submissions! Citizens of Orleans, my faithful, valiant citizens, my brothers! return, and do even as ye have said; surrender your city; shed no more blood in a hopeless cause. Let my last act of sovereignty be to absolve ye from your oaths. Ye have nobly defended the throne of France as long as there was one. Go and tell your starving wives and children that they have no longer a king to die for."

The universal consternation infused by these despairing words, amounting almost to an abdication, kept all silent, and staring reproachfully at each other; while the envoys of Orleans, bursting into tears, and kneeling with clasped hands and the most piteous sighs and groans, implored the king not to desert them. "Ah, sire! sweet king! our dear sovereign! do not force us to yield our city to the slayers of our children!" they ejaculated.

"I cannot otherwise, my poor citizens," returned Charles. "Ye hear how these men talk, how they rave. Their swords are only sharp against each other. Who will attempt the rescue of Orleans? Ye see these knights, who hold themselves for the very flower and accomplishment of chivalry, all despair; none lends aid. Who then can blame the poor commons that they no longer dare to follow our standard to fields of vain carnage and death? We cannot cope with the English in battle—too often we have proved it. Farewell, and do not make me womanish, too."

"Return, bailiffs, to Orleans, but not with Dunois," said the Bastard, his broad chest heaving convulsively. "Dunois shall seek an asylum in some land where the spectre of Henry V. pursues not men with terror, in the sunshine. To our blessed Lord, and his sepulchre, do I henceforth dedicate this sword!"

And as the grief-struck warrior drew his memorable weapon, and raised it as if in affirmation of his oath to Heaven, the portal of the council-chamber flew open, and the archbishop of Rheims entered, attended by Jacques Cœur. Such was the general absorption, that even the appearance of such eminent personages scarcely excited any notice.

"Why, how is this, my liege?" said the prelate, regarding the whole scene with keen, interpreting eyes. "The meanest peer of France is usually welcomed by the rising of his fellows, and we are, or were, the first in spiritual degree."

"If thou art peer of France, France himself is a fugitive and a

beggar! and who rises to welcome men of that degree?" returned the king, bitterly. The tearful eyes of the queen, of Agnes Sorel, and indeed of all present, were turned with such hopelessness towards him that, desperate as he knew the condition of affairs to be, the archbishop was surprised.

"Orleans has not surrendered? No, no, the saintly maid assured me it was not so," he said, reading so much in the countenances of the envoys. "Then what means this visible abashment and sadness? I tell you, my royal son, Heaven is at length weary of pouring its vials of wrath on France! Never in her direst extremity hath Heaven deserted, or shall desert, the first land of the West that received the light of the Gospel! Behold it hath sent a warlike maiden to the redemption of France from her cruel foes, even at the moment when they deem their triumph certain!"

"Certes, 'tis a miracle to begin with that we have one left," said Alençon, who was the first to recover from the surprise of this announcement.

"Peace, dissolute boy, and keep your camp jests for a more licensed time!" returned the prelate, with a dignity that overawed even the reckless young prince. "My liege, would you but see this daughter of Heaven, you would believe in her, as I do! Eloquence streams from her, glorious and hopeful as the colours of a rainbow on the clouds of the tempest! And from what fountain but a celestial one can a simple and untaught peasant girl have drawn projects so vast, plans so full of wisdom and inspiration, which will evolve their own success as certainly as the thunder rends out the darkness of a storm?"

"Speak you, my good father, of the mad girl from Lorraine?" replied Charles. "What has changed your counsels so rapidly? Did you not warn me, on her approach, not to suffer her in my presence, not to debase my royal dignity by listening to the ravings of a peasant girl who dared to assume the powers confided only to the church and its saints?"

"And of such I nothing doubt her to be!" replied the prelate, though with some slight shade of embarrassment. "Sire, in these spiritual matters, a hasty credence argues as great lack of wisdom as an obstinate unbelief. It befitted not your majesty, nor that of the church, to mingle in what might prove lunacy or imposture. And though I have not seen this woman, I have tried her by infallible tests, and I tell you, sire, that—as in the old time God put His almight in the arm of Maccabees, scattering the Syrian myriads as the wind scatters the froth of the sea, even so shall France be saved and her enemies discomfited by a woman's arm—by the weakest thing in nature—that none but Himself and His church may have the glory!"

All present stared at the prelate in incredulous surprise. But the gravity and probity of his character gave a weight to his words, even in an improbable and marvellous statement like this, possessed by none other in the council. The ever-wakeful jealousy and suspicions of La Trimouille were nevertheless aroused.

"And how is this pleasing miracle to be wrought, my lord archbishop?" he said. "Has the church recovered its miraculous powers, lost during so many ages?"

"The church triumphant never lost them, and this virgin is the emissary of the Glorified One alone," replied Regnault de Chartres. "But let herself be heard: my lips are not sufficiently hallowed to utter the tidings!"

"Nay, it were all in vain!" said Charles, languidly sinking back into his chair of state. "I have resigned this seat and a crown too heavy for my brows—stripped of all its gems as it is! I have lost even hope, archbishop! Why should our Lady take such compassion on a sinner like Charles of France as to send a saint to my aid?"

"Above all, my liege, a female saint?" said the duke of Alençon, laughing.

"Sire, you are France, not merely Charles!" returned the prelate, without noticing this irreverent jest.

"And how say you, messire? A woman, a peasant, save France when her knights and nobles have failed?" said the envious Dammartin. "What will the chivalry of the world say to such tidings?"

"That a woman and a peasant saved France!" exclaimed the lady of La Trimouille, with a somewhat wild and singular laugh.

"But a woman?" said the Lady of Beauty. "Good faith, this is strange! Is she fair, very fair? Perchance of the robust beauty which at times these rustics boast?"

"And variety is delightful, though it be to leave the rose for the wild honeysuckle," said the ill-timed jester, Alençon.

The queen herself now looked at the archbishop with an expression of wonder and apprehension.

"Nay, Lady of Beauty," interrupted the argentier, very dexterously; "she who comes to the deliverance of France comes in a man's garb, to wear armour, brook blows, and wounds, and toil, and dangers of every kind, not to rival fair court dames in bowers and in delights."

"But how are we to know, reverend lord, that she is this simple shepherd lass you bid us expect—that she comes fresh and untutored from a poor village in the marshes of Champagne?" said the suspicious La Trimouille.

"Send for her guides in the first place, who bear the letters from De Baudricourt, for the knight, Jean de Metz," replied the prelate; and Jacques Cœur, instantly proffering to go on the message, made his exit.

"We are preparing one disappointment the more," said Charles, mournfully. "Meanwhile, my father, tell me what is the news of your fair niece? Has Jacques ransomed her?"

"My liege, no; her capturers demand more than we can by possibility gather—henceforth we must ransom our prisoners with steel, not gold," replied Regnault de Chartres, with a bitter pang. "But she is safe, doubtless, out of the power of the rude English knight—in the custody of the bishop of Beauvais."

"Safe!—as the dove in the vulture's claws!" said La Trimouille,

maliciously. "Were the Lady Melusine a kinswoman of mine, I had rather many times she were in the hands of an honest soldier, however rough, than in those of the smooth and courteous bishop."

"Peace, sir, since she is none!" replied the prelate; but curiosity was turned for a moment into this new channel, or, as not unfrequently happens, men were glad to distract their attention from the portentous feeling that oppressed them. The discourse was altogether of the events attending the rupture between the allied ravagers of Commercy, when Jean de Metz, accompanied by his squire, Bertrand de Poulangy, followed the argentier into the royal presence.

Nothing but the simplicity of truth could have carried the good but somewhat thick-headed knight, Jeanne's guide, without contradicting himself, through such a maze of questions and cross-questions as followed the delivery of his unvarnished tale. But Jean de Metz himself was a firm believer in the divine mission of his charge, becoming a convertite even in the course of a journey that exposed Jeanne d'Arc to the familiarity which is said rather to destroy than strengthen heroic illusions. He described her undaunted courage during their long transit through a wild and desolate country, chiefly occupied by the enemy. On one occasion especially, the particulars of which he mentioned, when he himself and his armed retinue were dismayed by stumbling on a body of English archers, she displayed so undaunted a demeanour that all were astonished, and the enemy, believing some potent force was at hand, retired in disorder. Equally or more enthusiastically did the good knight eulogize the holiness and purity of the maiden's life and conversation.

"Thou praisest these qualities in her as if thou hadst essayed them," said the licentious Alençon. "Is it even so, messire Jean de Metz? Or if, being a grimly knight, thou didst find her so perfect a Christian, what says this smooth-cheeked squire of yours? Wandering amidst pathless woods and wilds, thus familiarly—resting by night in the same lair, with only the glow of a watch-fire for coverlet, did no evil thought ever steal upon thy slumbers, youth?"

"Never, never!" exclaimed Jean de Metz. "I feign not that either of us is better than our compeers; but such a gracious, calm spirit breathes around her, that a statue of snow would have seemed to us as assailable. Moreover, when we rested by night in lonely places, she withdrew and prayed, and slept apart until the morning sun glittered through the leaves of our harbourage."

"Let her be brought to our presence, knight, and let the squire go with you," said Charles, benignantly, and the knight and squire, bending reverently, withdrew.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PRESENTATION OF JEANNE D'ARC.

"The spirit of deep prophecy she hath,
Exceeding the nine sibyls of old Rome."—*Henry VI.*

"And now, my lord of Rheims," resumed the king, turning to the prelate with a cloud of suspicion on his brow, which he had never before displayed to his sacerdotal counsellor; "if this maiden be, as you would have us think, a prophetess sent by Heaven to us, will she not know him to whom her mission is sent, with no other guidance than the light of her revelation? Therefore will we try her, by changing places and attributes with our cousin of Alençon."

The archbishop was greatly perplexed and alarmed, but he dared not refuse assent to so reasonable an experiment. Jacques Cœur folded his hands in despair, while the king hastily effected the transformation, and in a few moments Alençon ascended the throne with a ludicrous stalk of majesty, wearing the king's royal robe and crown; and snatching up his sceptre from the council-board, he seated himself with a swelling pomp of gesture that roused general mirth, while Charles retired among the group of courtiers who formed themselves purposely around it. The archbishop and the argentier exchanged glances of dismay.

Very shortly afterwards the sound of footsteps was heard in the eager hush of curiosity, and Jeanne d'Arc, with her chivalric attendants, entered. Every eye was fixed upon her with an intensity of gaze that might have abashed one well accustomed to the observation of multitudes, and the Lady of Beauty in particular scanned with anxiety the approaching figure. But Jeanne seemed in no wise daunted,—perhaps did not even feel this scrutiny. Some absorbing thought possessed her whole being, and rendered her insensible to aught extraneous; and the glancing light in her eyes seemed to seek one only object on which to concentrate all their powers like beams into a focus.

The prelate was prepared for much that was singular in her appearance, but still he was surprised when he beheld the reality. A peasant youth, of tall and energetic person, seemed to stand before him; but that the fuller development of the bosom, and the finer skin, betrayed her sex. There was nothing unusual in her dress, if its unaccordance with the latter was overlooked. She wore a frock of coarse gray frieze that descended to her knees, fastened by a belt at the waist, a short cloak and hood, and pantaloons or drawers that fitted tightly to her wooden shoes or clogs. Her hair was cut shorter than was usual even with men. But the glory of hope and inspira-

tion that shone on her brow, pale as it was, like the glow revived by a wind in white ashes, struck even the most incredulous and prepossessed against her with a feeling akin to awe.

As she approached the throne, the archbishop would certainly have attempted to give her some intimation of peril, but that he saw too clearly how intently La Trimouille watched him. Failure, and perhaps exposure, were things to be calculated upon; for Jean de Metz, who was short-sighted and much confused, exclaimed, dropping on his knees before Alençon, "My task is fulfilled! Maiden, behold the king of France!"

"Welcome, maiden, since so thou art called, and being rustically bred, perchance deservedly," said Alençon. "Here is our hand to kiss. What would you with the king of France?"

"Kneel, damsel; it is the wont of all who kiss the hand of our sovereign lord," said Charles, with a gracious gentleness that strongly contrasted with the pompous tone of his substitute.

But Jeanne did not kneel. Her eye dwelt with a visible and profound expression of disappointment and surprise on the person of the supposed kingly welcomer. In truth, the florid, laughing, duke of Alençon in no wise answered the pathetic portrait which womanly compassion and tenderness, and the medal she wore in her amulet, had deeply engraven in her soul, of the beautiful and disinherited king. Her gaze flashed almost instantly from Alençon to the sweet-toned speaker that had last addressed her; and with the true instinct of the heart, Jeanne d'Arc recognized the idol of her loyal visions, the youthful sovereign in whose form she had deified that passionate love of country which was her truest inspiration. Her cheeks and eyes suffused with a glow as if of fire, and stepping eagerly forward past the throne, she threw herself with a species of passionate adoration at the feet of Charles, exclaiming, "God save thee, royal Dauphin! king of France that shall be when anointed with the oil of the dove in Rheims! I kneel to thee, and to none other upon earth."

"God mend me! but either I play the king less kingly than I thought, or your highness more!" said the duke of Alençon, pettishly throwing off his royal mantle, and handing his diadem to Charles.

"It is true, maiden, the faithful lieges of France (they are few!) have called me their king," said the prince, evidently much surprised. "But this thou mightest easily learn in a two days' sojourn in Chinon —albeit, 'tis true, I have not shown myself out of the castle, for a longer time! Why, then, what mission is this thou proclaimest, and who has ordered thee to undertake it?"

"Never have I seen your royal face till now, gentle Dauphin, for so I must call you till the day of Rheims!" replied Jeanne, whose lustrous and yet tearful eyes still dwelt on the youthful king. "The Queen of Heaven, by the lips of the Archangel Michael, has commanded me to come into France, to raise the siege of Orleans, and crown your gracious brows in Rheims with the wreath of Charlemagne! I am a poor and simple shepherd maid, royal prince! but me hath she chosen in preference to great lords and chieftains of

antique glory, to redeem France and thee, thereby again, by a mighty miracle, preaching humility and reliance on heaven only to mankind!"

"Who has taught thee this rich and fraught sublimity of expression, then, girl?" said the archbishop. "It nothing smacks of the schools, indeed—but still less of what might be expected from one of thy degree? And how dost thou purpose to work these miracles? Shall legions of armed angels descend and battle round thy standard for France?"

"Messire, no! By the sword and lance of France shall France be saved; heaven needed not me to lead its angels if it pleased to work by their means! Nay, what more were necessary than the broad and blasting breath of lightning to wither our foes from the land?" replied Jeanne. "For my speech, it is such as is given me by Him who gives the harmonious roar to the bull, and his liquid whistle to the blackbird. Only on high subjects do I or can I speak highly; for the rest, I am a foolish, unlearned shepherdess, unfit for all clerkly discourse."

"Indeed thou art, and I say it to thy commendation," observed the primate. "But, girl, hast thou well considered the dangers and terrors that await thee? The English warriors are not poppies to be dashed aside by the playful staff of a shepherd maid."

"I know it—the ravagers!" exclaimed Jeanne with flashing eyes. "Why then do ye waste the time accorded me? Only one year shall I last in glory and success—why waste ye the hours? He who gives the lightning a path will give me mine, doubt it not, messires, and well I wot 'tis not the course of the flowery-banked stream, but of the cataract, that is marked out for me. Loosen me, then, for I feel chained like the torrent of winter in its rocks of ice! What should I fear, that dared to leave my sire and mother to their anguish? What should I fear, that laughed at the most hideous portents of the fiend? Yea, at the very hour of my departure, when I took my farewell, perhaps an everlasting one, of the haunts of my youth and tranquil hours; when I gazed in the Fairy Fountain, with eyes misty with tears, methought that the waters, which reflected mine image as in a glory, hardened into solid flame, and wrapped me in a shroud of agony! Yet I faltered not. My father and his whole village have been most bitterly wronged and maltreated on my account, yet have I never once looked back to weep. Alas, the old man hath not many suns to behold, and those have I darkened! The white fleece of his flock will no longer rejoice his eyes, nor will the harvest again wave golden in his gaze, until I return to comfort him. I pray ye, then, my sovereign liege, and ye, noble peers and knights, let me do my work, and return into my silence."

"Brave and tender-hearted maiden, ask what thou wilt, I for one will deny thee nothing," said Charles, with warmth. "I thought never again to call myself a king; but indeed not among the least of the miracles she announces is the hopefulness she breathes into my soul. I will resume my crown," said Charles, stretching his hand to take the diadem from Alençon. But Jeanne d'Arc interposed.

"Nay, sire, wreath your brows no longer with a mockery!" she

exclaimed. "Never until you have triumphed over your foes—never until you sit in Rheims, a crowned conqueror—wreath your brows with aught but the glory of your kingly majesty which French hearts shall all recognize as one."

"You promise largely, maiden," said La Trimouille, with a vague sentiment of doubt and apprehension. "Too largely; unless, like the prophets of old, you bestow on us some sign to accredit the divine source of your mission?"

"What would you have, Messire de la Trimouille?" said the archbishop, scornfully. "The plague of flies reversed, by the universal destruction of the court locusts that devour the verdure of the land?"

"Some sign, at all events, whatever is readiest," replied his opponent, in the same tone.

"Before Orleans I will deliver a sign which the enemies of France and of the Dauphin shall believe in!—What more do the friends of the Dauphin and France demand?" returned Jeanne, with a flush of military enthusiasm and ardour. "Yet it was warned me, that unbelievers should ask what this lord has asked, and a sign is granted me. A secret, known only to the gentle Dauphin and to the saints in Heaven, is confided to me. Let me speak with him alone, and I will relate it."

Charles looked embarrassed, and even alarmed. La Trimouille glared suspiciously at her, and the Lady of Beauty bit her bright lip till it seemed as if a wasp had stung it.

"My royal son, a sign has been demanded and is granted. Retire, and learn whether she speaks sooth," said the archbishop.

"It is the first time, my liege, that I have seen you afraid of a woman," said the incorrigible Alençon. "Jeanne, my friend, wouldst thou fear to communicate thy secret to me?"

"Why should I fear you, duke of Alençon?" returned Jeanne; and the sublime virginity of her look abashed even the royal coxcomb. "But I have neither mission, sign, nor purpose with any here but Charles of France."

"Retire—all—to the farther extremity of the chamber," said Charles, with a royal majesty which he could assume, when at times he overcame the voluptuous languor of his constitution. Then giving his hand to Jeanne d'Arc, he led her in the opposite direction to a deep bay window, dustily emblazoned, but lit to some brilliancy in the sunshine that streamed through it. The whole court, not excepting the queen herself, arose and followed the archbishop of Rheims to the opposite portals of the hall.

All turned eagerly on reaching the station, and perceived the king leaning with his back to the illuminated panes, his arms folded on his breast, and gazing with interest and expectation at Jeanne. Nothing he said was audible, but there was something indeed of supernatural grandeur and solemnity in her appearance as she stood in the parti-coloured radiance, speaking with passion and profound earnestness, though in the lowest tones of her voice, and in a bending attitude of reverence.

It soon, however, appeared, even to the distant spectators, that the king was struck with surprise. And no wonder. He heard the words of a prayer repeated, which on the previous night he had addressed to the Virgin in his oratory, when he felt well assured he was alone, and he was besides scarcely conscious that he had murmured it aloud. It expressed the doubts, the melancholy, and infirmity of his own heart, and he had certainly intended it for no human ear. In this prayer, Charles besought our Lady of Pity, that if he were the true son of Charles VI., King of France (a matter disputed by his enemies, and even flagitiously slurred on by the worst of them, his mother!) and rightful owner of the crown of France, she would be pleased to send him aid against his mortal foes, so that he might recover his inheritance, and drive the invaders from its bounds. But if not, he besought the same holy patroness to give him patience to endure the loss, make it as complete and sudden as possible, that he might no longer be tormented with vain efforts and the sufferings of his people, and secure him such a pittance as in her goodness she might deem sufficient for a dethroned king!

But this was only the text of the inspired messenger's eloquence. Warming with the heroic tenderness, mingled with lofty hope and courage, that filled her heart, she reproached the king so vehemently, and yet so lovingly, with his thought of deserting the land which had bled at every pore for him, with his doubts of the divine protection, with his ignoble vision of flight and submission to the conquerers, that all that was noble and generous in him too was roused. Keenly, though in general selfishly, sensitive, Jeanne's words, describing the woes and devotion of France, affected him even to tears.

La Trimouille's jealous eyes quickly discovered this emotion. "We do wrong to trust the king alone with this person," he exclaimed. "It may be a man in disguise, sent to assassinate him!" He stepped forward as he spoke, but a haughty wave of the king's hand admonished him to retire.

"Nay, it is no man! You may see her womanly sex in her eyes, they are so fraught with—I know not what," said the Lady of Beauty, pettishly.

"When the king makes you jealous, sweet Agnes," whispered Alençon, "you know how to avenge yourself; and who would give life itself for any the least cause to make him so in turn!"

"A man, fair husband?" repeated the Lady de la Trimouille. "Oh no, my husband; men go not mad generously, but according to their natures. This is a woman."

The interview was so long protracted, that at length nearly all the courtiers grew impatient, saving only the queen. She seemed even gratified with its duration, or perhaps with the visible uneasiness of the Lady of Beauty. "This is a woman of holy life and manner;—she will set us all, I trust, a good example," she said, more than once.

At last, to the great relief of the archbishop himself, the dialogue came to an end, and Charles beckoned the attendants to approach, meeting them midway with the maiden by his side.

"I must make confession, that ye may all in turn believe," he said, with much agitation; and, to the wonder of all the listeners, he repeated the revelation made to him, which he certified to be true in every particular.

"Then God and our Lady and the saints be praised! our city shall yet be saved!" exclaimed the bailiff of Orleans, with a burst of hysteric joy. "Say the word, my gracious king! Say that you will make one last effort, under guidance of this holy woman, to redeem us!"

"It shall be so! *Montjoye par liesse!*" exclaimed the king, shouting the ancient war-cry of France. "Who will follow her?"

"I will at least meet her in any place on the way from Orleans she shall appoint with me, though all the English that ever fought in France opposed me, ghosts and all!" exclaimed the gallant Dunois. "I vowed my sword to God, and the relief of Orleans it seems is to be His work!"

"What say you, grand marshal of France! will ye fight under a shepherd maiden's command?" said La Trimouille to the duke of Alençon.

"Truly, yea, if we may add human means to those from Heaven, I could be well content enough to have so buxom a companion in arms!" returned he, carelessly. "But when my standard advances to the relief of Orleans, De Richemont's shall float with it side by side."

"Then, fair cousin, we will dispense with its presence altogether!" said Charles, angrily. "And this pure and incorrupt maiden will well dispense with your company in her host. St. Sevère and Raix! Poton de Saintrailles and La Hire! will ye lead my soldiers, under the banner of the maiden, to victory and Orleans?"

"Yea, my liege, through a wilderness of lions!" shouted the Gascon knight; and the enthusiasm became almost universal. "Victory and Orleans!" resounded on all sides, and was echoed by none more enthusiastically than by the half-famished burgesses of the besieged city.

"Yes, return, faithful Frenchmen, to the valiant city of Orleans!" said Jeanne, lighting up with wild enthusiasm. "Tell it that a deliverer comes, and that the English shall as easily stop the wind that bends your forest groaning to its roots as Jeanne d'Arc on her path to your aid!"

"They will meet you, Jeanne! doubt it not—and to a purpose!" said the count of Clermont.

"Wherever we meet them, we will battle them, wherever we battle them, we will vanquish them!" returned the warlike maiden.

"But by what means do you purpose to enter Orleans?" said the aged Marshal de Saint Sevère, somewhat sobering down.

"By the grace of God, and the edge of the sword!" replied Jeanne d'Arc.

"Here is mine; thou shalt wear it, Jeanne, as an emblem of the absolute powers I confer upon thee!" said Charles, drawing the weapon he bore at his side, and offering the hilt to Jeanne.

"No, beautiful oriflamme!" she replied, gazing at the king with boundless tenderness and joy, and apostrophizing him by a fine metaphor as the flame-coloured, sacred banner of France. "No: it has been bidden me to demand a certain sword, buried beneath the high altar of the church of St. Catherine of Fierbois, upon whose blade are engraven three royal fleurs-de-lys of France!"

A sharp sigh, approaching to a half-suppressed shriek, burst from the Lady de la Trimouille. "What asks she there?" she exclaimed. "It is the sword of John of Burgundy, which he wore that day——"

"When he justly perished on the bridge of Montereau for the murder of mine uncle of Orleans!" interrupted the king. "So be it—it shall be sought. I knew not till now what had become of it, and he was wont to boast it had belonged to the champion Roland!"

"That sword ruined France—it shall restore it!" exclaimed the archbishop with solemnity, though as much puzzled as any one how Jeanne had learned the place of the weapon's interment.

"I will work her a standard, pure and holy as her own heart!" exclaimed the queen.

"But where, since it appears we are to work by human means, where are the arms, the men, and the money?" said La Trimouille, who, although pleased with the exclusion of his enemy, the constable, had an undefined dread of the new influence.

"Come to us alone, courageous virgin! and with your aid we will not fear the English, were they more numerous than wasps around a honey-hive," said the enthusiastic bailiff of Orleans.

"In those words ten thousand men have spoken!" exclaimed the triumphant archbishop. "Already the scattered and fear-struck soldiery of France rally like affrighted herds that hear the voice of the shepherd."

"And for gold, take all my jewels, all I possess, Master Argentier, my lands and castles,—all in pledge to your Jews," exclaimed Agnes Sorel, yielding to the impulse of her naturally generous and high-toned feeling on all points not relating to her power as a woman and a beauty; and rending all her costly ornaments from her dress, she threw them on the council-table before the argentier.

"And I," said Regnault de Chartres,—"and I subscribe all the gold which, with infinite toil and pains, I gathered from the ransom of my niece. Henceforth French prisoners must be ransomed only with steel."

"Alack, I have nothing left but my sword!" said Dunois, "but that is ready."

"And I will stake, what shall procure perhaps more than gold can buy, my credit!" said the argentier. "Provisions, wine, horses, and arms, I guarantee sufficient to relieve the famine of Orleans, and attempt the raising of its siege. This good resolution restores me once more to my magic coffers in men's trust!"

"Ay, ay, a lean lord and a fat steward,— the proverb holds," said the count of Dammartin, scornfully.

"I should be leaner yet, count, but for my steward, who, certes, is none of the fattest to look at," said Charles, smilingly. "I owe to

Jacques Cœur my daily meals, but how to thank all your loves and loyalty I scarcely know, least of all, sweet Lady of Beauty, your's!"

And yielding to the passion in which the beautiful and witty Agnes had long enthralled him, Charles raised her hand to his lips and kissed it with chivalrous devotion. The queen turned away, and then it was that, probably for the first time, Jeanne d'Arc took notice of the magnificent and courtly loveliness of the king's paramour. She was even startled by its splendour, and continued for some moments to gaze at Agnes with so strange a depth of scrutiny and observation, that the lady in her turn started when raising her eyes, blushing and beaming with pleasure, from the king, she encountered those of the heroic maid. A pang of an unknown nature and intensity shot through the heart of Jeanne d'Arc, and Agnes Sorel herself added to the pain by a question intended to show a self-possession, which she was far from retaining under those mysterious orbits. "But wherefore, excellent maiden!" she said, "wherefore do you wear these masculine weeds instead of ours, which you might honour so much?"

"That men may not entertain a carnal love forbidden to all, but above all to me—may forget that I am a woman, and follow me only as the messenger of heaven!" replied Jeanne, with a concise sternness that unconsciously sounded like rebuke to Agnes.

"A woman, and forbidden to love and be loved?" she replied with a species of disdain and defiance.

"On earth!" said Jeanne d'Arc, but completely unknown to herself, her gaze wandered and fixed, with a passionate and devouring melancholy in its expression, on the beautiful face of the young king. "Give me your blessing, holy messire!" she continued with sudden eagerness, "and let us be doing."

"Rather bless me, thou saint uncanonized!" replied the archbishop; "nevertheless, as thou wilt. Be thou blessed, then, here and hereafter! Maiden, arise, gird on the sword; sheathe thy pure and noble breast in the steel of battle! Go forth, and return the first of thy sex who has reaped the laurels of war! No glory and no triumph which the king can confer shall be denied; no reward thy generous spirit demands be refused! Go forth and save France; and while France remains, never shall she forget that she owes her redemption to a woman and a peasant. Dost thou accept the covenant?"

"With soul and body, eternally!" exclaimed Jeanne d'Arc, kneeling and clasping her hands, and praying for some instants in a rapt ecstacy of joy, while all the court gazed at her in silent awe, "Lo; now I am ready! Before this benediction, my father's rash curse halts; but for my reward, I demand only of heaven the salvation of my king, of France, and of mine own soul!"

CHAPTER XII.

BEFORE ORLEANS.

"Some unborn sorrow, ripe in fortune's womb,
Now coming tow'rds me, grieves my inmost soul."—*Shakspeare.*

THE regent-duke of Bedford kept his court at this eventful period in Paris, and thither Sir John Fastolfe hastened to lay his complaints against his former ally, the bishop of Beauvais, before the English council, and demand redress.

Good reasons of complaint the Dragon Knight undoubtedly appeared to have. The departure of the bishop into Normandy, with all his forces, rendered it impossible for Fastolfe to maintain himself single-handed at Commercy. This failure, however unjustly, he felt to be a slur on his military reputation, which his achievements had raised to the most brilliant lustre. He was deprived of all the fruits of a fatiguing and dangerous enterprise, and, as it plainly appeared, by a concerted plan of fraud, for who could doubt the real state of the case when the bishop returned to the capital of his see, with the supposed mutineers of Franquet d'Arras, the prisoner, and all the plunder of the Meuse, and resided there in perfect tranquillity and good understanding with them?

Fastolfe was the regent's favourite captain, and, on the other hand, the ambitious and turbulent prelate was an object of dislike and mistrust with the English rulers of France. But Bedford, the calmest and sagest politician of his time, rarely listened to passion in forming his resolves. It happened that at this period, when his exhausted treasury was the greatest difficulty of the war, that the regent was busied in a project of levying a benevolence from the clergy of his party. He encountered great opposition in this purpose, and it only required the leadership and resistance of so powerful a prelate as the count-bishop of Beauvais to make the whole plan abortive. Differences had also arisen between the English and their ally, the duke of Burgundy. In their despair, the people of Orleans had offered to surrender their city to the keeping of the latter, on behalf of their captive lord. But Bedford, very reasonably, refused to yield the fruits of so much blood, toil, and treasure, at the moment when his generals seemed ready to pluck it for his own basket. Nevertheless, the denial greatly offended the haughty Burgundian, and Cauchon was known to be devoted to this powerful malcontent, and certainly ready to take his side in any quarrel, if irritated by grievances of his own. His strong city and territory nearly in the centre of Normandy, his numerous vassals and dependents, not to mention the little army

of mercenaries he continued to keep in pay, made his enmity dangerous in such near neighbourhood to Paris.

The regent therefore refused compliance with Sir John's impetuous demands for forces to reinstate him in his rights, and take vengeance on the mutineers of Commercy. Moreover, the bishop was by no means destitute of very fair and reasonable answers to the remonstrances of the council of Paris. He justified his keeping the Lady Melusine a prisoner, by the necessity in which he stood of obtaining her ransom to satisfy the demands of his troops. He accounted for the abandonment of Commercy—on finding that Fastolfe limited his charge to a general complaint of his desertion,—by alleging the mutinous disposition of his troops, and the disagreement of opinion between himself and the English leader. The violent scene in the town-house of Vaucouleurs, the accusation, the blow, and the anathema exchanged by the military and clerical allies, were prudently omitted on both sides from the statements. With Fastolfe, one movement was probably a chivalrous regard for the honour of a woman whom (strange to say) he began to remember with tenderness, or, at all events, with compassion, when she was fairly lost to him, and in the power of his unscrupulous enemy. Another, was the dread and horror with which he shrank from the idea of declaring himself in a state of excommunication, even under the ban of so unworthy a priest, for not the less was he supposed to wield the powers of the Church.

In short, the bishop of Beauvais, in a polite and cultivated manner, showed plainly to the regent's commissioners that he was in the right in all he had done, or that it would take some three thousand men-at-arms and a long siege to prove that he was not. Meanwhile the coldness between the English and Burgundians continued, and grew daily more menacing. The want of money in the English treasury hourly became more urgent, and an event of portentous nature suddenly claimed and absorbed attention.

The arrival and reception of Jeanne d'Arc at the court of Charles VII., the stupendous mission she announced, and the miraculous assurance of success she pretended to, circulated rapidly as the flame of lightning through a sultry atmosphere. The policy of the French leaders, and the love and belief in the marvellous always prevalent among the masses of mankind, contributed to spread the tidings in all directions. And what more wonderful spectacle, without its preternatural adjuncts, had the world yet seen, than a youthful woman offering herself to danger and death in defence of her vanquished country?

The superstition of the times rendered no wonder incredible that claimed either a celestial or diabolical agency. The French announced to their enemies one of the former species,—a holy prophetess, inspired by the saints of God to the deliverance of France, and assured of triumph. But very different was the opinion formed by the English on the subject. Fastolfe was the first among them to declare, on hearing the news, and with an infectious terror that shook the stoutest heart of the listeners, that the French court had concluded a league

with the powers of evil, in despair of any further resistance to their enemies by human means.

Hitherto Fastolfe had frequently doubted whether his imagination had played him a trick on that memorable night, at the Fairy Fountain, or whether its fantastic spirits had been allowed to vex him with unreal horrors, in revenge for the intended violation of so holy a vigil as that of our Lady. But the tidings that spread of the extraordinary commencement of Jeanne d'Arc's career, thundered conviction into his soul. He now believed in all he had seen at the fatal tree of Domremy; and concluded that the maiden had yielded to the temptation by which he had heard her supernaturally solicited, and had purchased earthly triumph and success at the price of that immortal essence the evil powers were supposed so greatly to covet.

It may be thought that Fastolfe concealed his personal reasons for the certainty he everywhere diffused of the reality of this frightful belief. But there was ample material of accusation in the singular events of Commercy, in the tales current of Jeanne's early years, and in her own extraordinary character and demeanour. The duke of Bedford, a man of superior enlightenment and of cold fancy, without at first lending any credit to these wild rumours, countenanced them as a matter of policy, in order to throw odium on his enemies. He was aware of the superstitious and gloomy cast of Fastolfe's mind; and it was not until the amazing events of her career extorted belief from the most incredulous, that Bedford shared the dreadful doubts he took much pains to propagate.

But this weapon was a sharp-handled one, that hurt the wielder. It became, indeed, generally noised and believed among the English soldiery, that a sorceress, armed with powers from hell, had come to the assistance of the enemies whom they had utterly discomfited in fair conflict. Horror and indignation were roused to the utmost, but with those sentiments mingled largely some vague, unutterable, tremendous shadow of dread, that cast a darkness over men's souls, like that of an approaching tempest, over their visual sense.

The belief and terror inspired by the supposed science of witchcraft was universal among all the nations of Europe, but in an especial degree among the English. The vein of gloom in the national character, the isolated position of the island, and extreme ignorance of the lower classes of the people, produced this result, remarked by the contemporaries of our ancestors. The powers and attributes ascribed to the professors of this grisly science were certainly of a kind to fill the human heart with dismay. All the mysterious and terrific operations of nature were imputed to the agency of its fiendish instruments, not only in the popular creed, but in that of the gravest theologians and *savants* of the age. Strange forms of disease, mental and bodily; disasters by sea and land; tempests, and delusions of fearful kinds; madness; loss of wealth, possessions, and renown; were believed to be in the power of these embodiments of infernal malice to inflict on their selected victims. A direful and eternal price was, indeed, to be paid for the privileges thus conferred, or for the glories and enjoyments secured by the sorcerer to himself. But the self-accusation of

the human heart suggested that in the breast of those where it beat strongest, scarcely any pledge would be deemed too great even for the temporary enjoyment of its covetings. The vague nature of the powers thus granted and employed added to the fears they evoked, or rather, left them limitless. No one formed any clear apprehension of what was to be expected from the portentous apparition that filled every soul with unquiet stirrings. The idea of a mere woman, a peasant girl, leading the hosts of France to battle and victory, would have excited only the scorn and mirth of those veteran armies which had so often overthrown them. But for a woman to be of the diabolic craft was considered so usual a circumstance, that it only strengthened the general conviction and terror. The disgusting and horrible fancies of the age represented the Father of Evil as a boundless voluptuary who delighted most in winning the descendants of Eve to his hideous pleasures and service.

Meanwhile the incredulous, if any such there were, could not deny the danger of the symptoms accompanying the advent of this unknown agency among the events of the time. From the lowest depths of despondency and yielding, the French passed, with a velocity not at all unusual in their versatile blood, to projects of resistance full of hope and audacity. It could not be doubted that, in obedience to the summons and promises of Jeanne d'Arc, the French court had resolved on a great effort to raise the siege of Orleans. Messengers arrived from the earl of Suffolk, who commanded the besiegers, with the most pressing entreaties for reinforcements of every kind.

The regent and English council were well informed that an extraordinary discouragement and backwardness were visible in the operations of the siege, while, on the other hand, the most active preparations were making to raise it in all the countries adhering to Charles VII. A powerful force was assembling at Blois, whose ranks were daily swelled by the revived courage and zeal of the people. According to English belief, the French were encouraged to trust in the false divinity of their prophetess by a master-stroke of infernal artifice. Whether to refute the scandals propagated by the enemy, or to spread the tidings of her mission with more striking effect, Jeanne d'Are was examined before a commission of doctors of theology and the Parliament of Poictiers, who pronounced that herself and her purposes were holy, and inspired by Heaven. This was enough to rouse the eager and enthusiastic French imagination, and to move it to extraordinary outward signs of the smouldering flame, kindled, as it were, by the sparks of a falling ruin.

The council of Paris could no longer consider the peril imaginary when, in a fit of anger at the rejection of his mediation, the duke of Burgundy ordered his troops to withdraw from the siege of Orleans. At no period had the English force before that city equalled the vast extent of the works to be covered or assailed, but this desertion left so wide a gap, that it was necessary to fill it instantly. Still confiding in the fortune of England, and like most unsympathetic politicians, not dreaming of the vast change at hand, Bedford calmly resolved to supply the absence of his allies without displaying any ill-timed

resentment. The hour of vengeance—or, at least, the ability to inflict it—would most certainly follow on that sounding the destruction of the last barrier of the Loire. Bedford had some such idea in his cogitation, it is probable, when he appointed Sir John Fastolfe to the command of the reinforcement, and promised him, as a reward, that he should be allowed to lead it against his enemies in the bishopric of Beauvais, after the fall of Orleans.

It can scarcely be credited, but the motive that vanquished a secret reluctance in the breast of Fastolfe to going on this enterprise, was his hope that he should be thus enabled to return and force the prelate to withdraw his ban of excommunication. He knew it was useless to hope to obtain it by any other means, unless the abject and degrading submissions required by the imperious prelate. No feeling of resentment, bitter as that was, he cherished—nor the softer reminiscences which haunted him of the love and misfortunes of Melusine, had so much influence over Fastolfe as this prospect of redress. Though the censure he had incurred was known only to himself, his sentencer, and a few distant strangers, it was sufficient to poison the peace of mind of the religious knight of England. It deprived him of those spiritual rites, in the due observance of which he placed so much of his confidence. He could not partake of any sacrament, aware that no priest would hear confession, or grant absolution, to one under an ecclesiastical interdict. He himself imagined that his presence at the sacred offices of the Church profaned them, and dragged about with him everywhere the secret consciousness of something more terrible and menacing than the justice due to any species of merely human guilt.

The regent's choice of him was, in fact, applauded by all who had any right to form an opinion, save the man on whom it had fallen. Fastolfe's military renown, his proved courage, and religious character, rendered him apparently the very leader for the occasion. His former disputes with Talbot ought to have made this species of triumphant return to the camp very pleasing to him. But it was not so. In addition to the fearful thoughts infused by the circumstance of the curse, under which he laboured, the most ignorant and planet-struck of the vulgar could not form an imagination so dreary and threatening as Fastolfe's conjured up on the portents to be expected from the advent of Jeanne d'Arc. Had it been to encounter the dragon, whose insignia he wore, and had won so proudly, or one whose wings spread broadly as a tempest, and whose jaws vomited flames as destructive, the English knight would have gone more cheerfully to encounter it, than the unknown terrors wielded by the sorceress of France. Yet it was, above all, necessary that he who had been selected for the very purpose, should display a calm front; and as he had been the first to spread the baleful renown of the maiden of Domremy, be the first to show how valiant men should encounter even a supernatural foe.

But every hour's march that brought Fastolfe and his reinforcement nearer to the camp before Orleans deepened the melancholy and foreboding in his soul. He doubted not, as we have said, that Jeanne

d'Arc had made a compact with the fiend, and, though it was usual with the infernal powers, in the end, to play their unhappy victims false, the price at which they sold themselves was usually accorded in the meantime. In this instance, the bribe was doubtless victory over the English, to be accomplished by what devilish and unknown horrors? For the first time, the brave English captain felt his heart quake as he asked himself the question. And with especial reason, for he alone, of all the assailing host, might consider himself as the personal enemy of the sorceress—a marked object of her hatred and vengeance, as the only witness and accuser of her alliance with the terrific powers that were to aid her. He alone, of all that were to struggle with them, was deprived of the shielding protection of the church—an excommunicated, unhallowed combatant!

With these depressing sentiments there mingled a deep and painful throbbing of compassion, lingering admiration for the grand qualities, the wild beauty and supernatural courage of the youthful woman who dared thus ally herself with the tremendous inhabitants of darkness, to effect an object which even the hearts of the conquerors themselves acknowledged to be great and worthy, in one of the race of France. Yet these milder feelings that continually insinuated themselves into the soul of Fastolfe increased his fears. The suddenness of the passion he had conceived for the rustic and defying charms of Jeanne d'Arc, when all the love and loveliness of Melusine had failed to inspire him with any, suggested to the Dragon Knight an idea universally prevalent, which ascribed a dreadful spell of fascination to the eye of a witch. Once enthralled in this magic glance, it was not in human energy to break through the binding network, scarcely in the might of the Church itself. The singular circumstances of their first interview always recurred to the memory of the devoted victim of superstition, and the excesses so alien to his nature, in which he had immediately plunged, enforced the explanation like a conviction upon him. Finally, his over-wrought and haunted imagination took refuge in a strange craving and impatience to reach the scene of action and know the worst.

These gloomy cogitations were faithfully reflected in the countenances of the archers and men-at-arms with whom Fastolfe advanced into the Orléannois. The once jolly verdurer, Wulfstan of Warbois, and his companions of Commercy, were among them. The infection of dread had been largely communicated by these soldiers, who had what seemed authentic intelligence and visual testimony to render against the sorceress. Wulfstan was restored to all his former honours and posts near the person of his lord, but not to his gallant cheer of old. He, too, was in a manner personally involved; he, too, had not been able to obtain absolution for his offence of desiring to marry a witch. The bishop of Beauvais had refused it in scorn and rage at his failure in the more important purpose of his visit to Domremy, and the camp chaplain adhered to the same policy in the expectation of a handsome share in the plunder of Orleans, as a bribe to obtain it. The whole reinforcement, in fact, were tormented with vague musings on the horrors that awaited them, and none of a military kind, unless a

fancy which started in the verdurer's brain when they arrived in sight of Orleans may be considered so. It happened to be an exceedingly warm noonday, and Wulfstan remembered to have heard in some old ballad that, in the time of the crusades, the Saracen magicians were wont to bake the Christians alive in their armour, by intolerable glares of the sun. He began to cogitate whether it was by some such device that the French sorceress intended to raise the siege of Orleans? The chance of open battle and defeat never once occurred to an archer who had fought at Azincourt, and whose arrows were scarcely dried from the bloodshed of the battle of the Herrings.

The reinforcement had now passed through the deepest shades of that immense forest of Orleans, whose remains still compose one of the largest of European woodlands. It extended at that period to an incredible distance on both shores of the Loire, into whose valley they had descended. The besieged city appeared in the midst of its fertile plain, which this year waved with no green spring corn, and whose unpruned vineyards seemed running wild with bloom and leafy luxuriance. A wonderful silence and desolation presided over the landscape, which yet glistened all over with the oil of plenty and gladness. The Loire, beloved and besung by the troubadours, wound with his broad, silvery wave through flowery pastures, no longer cropped by herds and flocks innumerable, but silent, waste, and deserted. It was the pleasantest time of spring, the closing in of April, but neither the cheerful beauty of the bright spring foliage, nor the singing of the birds, nor the aspect of the rich country they were come to conquer, brought any comfort to the hearts of the approaching soldiery. Fastolfe, himself, started and turned pale when the towering masses of the cathedral of Orleans first came in sight, frowning, as it seemed, on besiegers and besieged, like a visible presence of outraged religion.

The devastated condition of the immediate vicinage of Orleans added to the gloomy effect of those vague surmises in men's breasts. Burned churches, monasteries, and farm-houses, destroyed either by the patriotic zeal of the besieged, or the wrath of the besiegers, were encountered at every step of the advance. The sacrilegious destruction of certain of these holy edifices was believed to be the cause of the earl of Salisbury's doom, who was killed by a cannon-ball at the commencement of the siege. The little skill acquired in the use of artillery, in fact, made this event seem little short of a miracle, until further experience of the abilities of Maître Jean de Lorraine, who commanded the bombards in Orleans, reconciled the English soldiery to a belief in the naturalness of the means employed.

The arrival of Sir John Fastolfe was anxiously looked for both by the chiefs and masses of the dispirited English army; but the pale, rigid aspect of the once courageous leader, and of those in his train, was certainly not the species of example required. Yet Fastolfe's pride and stateliness returned, when a messenger arrived from the great Bastille of St. Laurent, as the fortification was called that covered the siege on the right bank of the river, and on its most important point, being that towards Blois, whence any succour to the

city would most probably arrive. The standard of the valiant Lord Talbot, who held the second authority in the camp, by rank, and the first by the influence of his impetuous and overbearing character, flaunted scornfully from the tower in the centre; and he sent to request Fastolfe to tarry his accompaniment to the head-quarters on the southern bank of the river. But Fastolfe replied that the cantonment of his soldiers admitted of no delay, and leaving them to exchange conjectures and fears with their old comrades of arms, who flocked around them, he crossed the Loire in a barge specially stationed for the purpose.

Passing a fortified island midway in the stream, established by the English to protect the passage, Fastolfe landed with a few attendants on the opposite shore. About a mile to his right he perceived the deserted huts of the Burgundian encampment, formed round the abbey of St. Loup, all but the walls of which had been destroyed by fire or some explosion of combustibles. Nearly as far off on his left was the great suburb of Orleans, already gained by the besiegers, for this side of the Loire was entirely in their possession. Two strong fortifications, called the Bastille of St. Privé and the Bastille of St. Jean, defended the approach to the camp, or rather lodgings of the besiegers, in this direction, where they had established themselves in the deserted dwellings of the Orleanese. Under this good shelter, the English carried on their operations without much molestation from the arrows or artillery of their enemies. The position was secured against any sudden attack or sortie by a prodigious redoubt thrown up on the land-side of the great bridge of twenty-five arches, crossing the Loire. A castle, consisting of two towers and a massive keep, situated about the third arch of the bridge, was also in the hands of the besiegers. This was separated only by two broken arches from the French intrenchments, thrown up in the form of a bulwark, to defend the passage of the bridge, and whence the fatal cannon-ball had sped to its mark in the unfortunate Salisbury's brain. In spite, or perhaps in defiance, of his predecessor's ill-luck, the earl of Suffolk had fixed his head-quarters in this castle on the bridge, which was styled the Tournelles. It was a convenient post for a commander, for its high battlements overlooked all but the loftiest buildings in Orleans, on the opposite shore, and displayed as in a map the whole plain beyond, and the long chain of sixty forts by which the blockade was maintained throughout the compass of the city, from St. Laurent to a fortification of almost equal strength and size, called London, built on the ruins of a monastery of the Augustins, on the southern side of the river. The defence of the conquered suburb was thus completed on the right, and the communications riveted between the two divisions of the English host.

Engaged in surveying this scene and in consultation, Fastolfe found the earl of Suffolk, and some of his principal captains, on the high battlements of the keep of the Tournelles. Among these, the young and chivalrous Lord Scales and Sir Thomas Gladesdale, a leader sprung from the lowest ranks of the army, but famous for his deeds in arms, were the most distinguished. All were in complete armour,

and the earl of Suffolk wore panoply of the utmost richness, as if he took delight in making himself the mark of observation.

Fastolfe could easily learn that his reinforcements were needed, from the warmth of his own welcome. But he was less pleased to find that the dejection of spirits he imagined he concealed from all but himself was observed in his countenance.

"Why, God-a-mercy, worshipful knight!" exclaimed the earl of Suffolk, "you come among us with a face as whey-coloured as any fool of us all that gapes for whirlwinds of fire and fiends from Blois! What ails you? Have you won more scars in Lorraine,—but indeed we heard not of any strife ye had there, unless with the bold bishop and his crosier? By Jesu's dear blood, the lance of Rouvrai should have outmatched that!"

"Nothing ails me but hurried marches and great fatigue to join you, noble brothers," replied Fastolfe. "But truly methinks I find but faint cheer among ye! What is the matter?"

"All is well enough now," said the earl, hastily. "The accursed Brabanters and Frieslanders left our siege uncovered when their peevish lord withdrew them, on a side whence it seems we may look for a cloud to burst. Look below, how firmly I have this stiff-necked city in my squeeze, and how hunger rails in their bellies worse than a leech's bitter drinks, and their leaders call it mutiny! But you have heard doubtless how the French at Blois talk of putting provisions in the city, which else cannot bide my strangling grasp another se'nnight, for very weakness. Therefore are you, Sir John, the most welcome man I have seen for many a day; for with your stout Norfolk men at St. Loup I will not fear that the devil himself can enter Orleans!"

"Mine endeavour shall not be lacking to keep him out, sir earl," replied Fastolfe, with a strange dizziness passing over his sight. "But who says the fiend shall come, for against devilish enchantments and witchery what can a mere mortal arm?"

"Well spoken, valiant brother! Then tell me how can so very mere mortals as the French, led by a mere mortal woman, break these links of adamant, and enter Orleans in our despite?" said Suffolk, triumphantly, and drawing Fastolfe by the arm, he led him, accompanied by the rest of the captains, to an embrasure in the ramparts commanding the extensive view we have described.

"Ha, yonder laughing rogue with his veuglaire on the bridge takes note of us," continued Suffolk, after watching with anxiety the progress of the renowned captain's eye from St. Laurent to the convent of the Augustins, until following it his own rested on the central masses of the city and the fortifications of the besieged immediately below. The ruin wrought in Orleans by the ponderous stones cast into the walls from the English bombards, was very visible, but seemed in no wise to have abated the resolution of the defenders. The ramparts on the opposite shore of the river, and the whole circuit of the walls were watchfully guarded, and innumerable banderols planted at intervals, marked the stations of the gallant chivalry who had devoted themselves to defence of the city. There was even

an appearance of bustle and animation in the throngs that could be observed pacing the narrow, winding streets, though diminished by distance and descent of vision to something like the appearance of a swarming ant-hill. But Suffolk's attention was caught by the motions of some half dozen men in armour on the bridge, who were busied in setting a piece of cannon, of enormous size, used in casting stone balls, under the direction, as it seemed, of a little, active, monkey-like being who stood by with a lighted piece of tow in his hand.

"It is that imp of Satan, doubtless, Maître Jean," said Sir Thomas Gladesdale. "He is going to send us some of his sugar-plums, as he calls his flying rocks! Oh, by God's life, if ever we enter Orleans, that cowardly manslayer shall take a flight out of his own engine."

"He slew Salisbury, though some thought it was the devil himself rode on the flame and directed it," said Suffolk. "Let us retire; or would you prefer, Sir John, to await one of the kisses from yonder yawning mouth?"

"If my advice be asked, I say, let us storm the walls once more—and at once—before this destined relief can arrive from Blois," exclaimed Fastolfe, without hearing or without heeding the warning, to the great surprise of his companions. "This is my advice, and if it be followed, I swear to our Lady I will be the first to escalade and enter, and Orleans may yet be ours."

"So deem not I!" said a stern, angry voice behind, and all turning recognised the Lord Talbot. The greetings between this leader and Fastolfe were in themselves likely to be sufficiently brief; but they were cut short by the roar of the veuglaire on the bridge below, followed by the crash of a vast piece of stone against the battlements, which, however, fell beneath its aim. Nevertheless, the whole building shook, and some detached pieces fell in the river with the ponderous bomb itself.

"My merry rogue! but our turn will come," said Talbot, shaking his clenched gauntlet over the wall, while the little cannoneer threw himself on the ground, to avoid a flight of arrows instantaneously poured upon him. But his wild screeching laugh of derision was audible even to the tower where the English captains were grouped.

"Nay, my Lord Talbot, it needed not your say to let all men know you were ever of the contrary opinion to him that spoke last," said Fastolfe, haughtily. "I left you with good assurance on your lips that Orleans should yield before the snows were off our fields in England; but the plum is reddening on the Orleans' orchards, and, to my thought, ye are farther off than ever."

"Ay, by St. George, for doubtless your knighthood remembers your monkhood, and looks aghast at an old wife's tale of witches and devils!" returned Talbot, whose scorn of the popular credulities, and the rough hand he occasionally laid on the goods of the church, had gained him among the French the terrible addition of atheism to the more certain traits of his character.

"We have yet to learn if it is one, Lord Talbot!" replied Fastolfe.

"By all the saints—and there are enow for a rattling oath—wha

mean you, good Sir John?" said Talbot, vehemently. "What! shall the French—over fields of whose breasts we have spurred our chargers to victory, against uncounted odds—shall they who dare not face us, with the bravest knights of France at their head, vanquish us now when a woman leads?"

"Ay, but what manner of woman, good Lord Talbot?" returned Fastolfe, gloomily.

"I am no judge of such ware, but if she comes in my way, I will spare wringing of her neck until such time as some sorrowful and devout knight—say yourself, Sir John—can truly report to us," said Talbot, with a scornful laugh.

"Why, what manner of woman deem you she is?" said the earl of Suffolk, anxiously. "The soldiers affright each other with dismal forebodings that she is a witch sent from hell to drive us out of France; but surely you, Sir John, the Dragon Knight——"

"To drive us out of France!" interrupted the amazed Talbot. "By the cross, and the rood, and the thrice-blessed tree, if she make Talbot yield one foot of French earth to her, be she angel or devil, may he stumble backward with it into a dishonoured grave!"

"My lords, as ye well wot, my blood is a churl's, and but churlishly renowned until these wars," said Sir Thomas Gladesdale, whose vigorous pride took refuge in disdaining the advantages possessed by his noble comates. "Yet as I think—if this witch comes red-hot from the lowest hell, with an army of iron-winged fiends beating the air into lightning about us—she shall not make my cheek bate a jot of its colour, or my quarterless shield retire!"

"But, Talbot, it is scarcely a week since you did counsel me even as Sir John now counsels—to win these proud walls ere their boasted deliverance can come?" said Suffolk, who marked with much internal misgiving the paleness of Fastolfe's looks.

"But that was ere these mad old gossips' tales were spread among us," replied Talbot. "I know not how it is, but methinks all our lusty cheer has left us and gone to beat ruddily in the hunger-fainting hearts of Orleans! With grief and shame be it said, but not, I trust, to our wives at home, the soldiers have no heart to the work! But let only this last attempt of the French fail (and perchance 'tis nought but a French vaunt and lie), and either those of Orleans must surrender, or famish, or our merry men will regain their crowing spirits to overleap these walls and make them ours! And how is it possible for French art or force to break this sixty-linked chain with its six tower-stancheons?"

With all his emulous dislike of his younger and renowned rival Talbot looked anxiously and inquiringly at Fastolfe, whose eye once more perused the scene below. All was now tranquil. The little cannoneer had left his piece after the *feu-de-joie* with which he had ironically saluted the new arrival. The encampment of the army in its regular little huts along the vast line of the blockade presented a perfectly orderly and village-like aspect. Only the distant gleam of the arms of scouts or foragers returning to the camp disturbed the deceptive appearance of peace and security.

"Is there aught that may be amended, deem you, Sir John?" continued Talbot, anxiously.

"Nothing: the bastilles command all the sally-ports of the city; they cannot stir from within but at great hazard," he replied. "And as for those from Blois, if they come on the north shore of the river, your St. Laurent blocks the way; if on the south, my St. Loup."

Talbot nodded assent, and, with more cordiality than he had yet shown, proceeded to point out in detail to Fastolfe more minute particulars of the strength and weaknesses of the English position. Suffolk and the other captains listened like men who know their master in a science is speaking.

This amicable portion of the dialogue was interrupted by the arrival of the earl of Suffolk's brother, Sir Alexander de la Pole, who rushed out on the battlements laughing in peals, in spite of the respect due to the presence in which he stood.

"Jesu, have mercy! Pardon me, lords; but here we have a herald —two heralds from this precious Maid at Blois—come to scold with us!" he exclaimed. "Will ye see them; or shall I put them in a barrel of tar, and send them alight into Orleans from a culverin?"

"Peace, Alick!—the devil's own heralds should have courteous entreatment," said the earl of Suffolk. "Let them come—we will see them."

"Nay, brother, you are to blame," said Talbot. "This is too great insolence in a low-born serf, to send messages to the chivalry of England! As you will; but, by the little faith they say I have, if I catch her, her petticoats shall scarcely save her from a fitting punishment!"

"Let me have the chastisement of her then, my lord; but yet she comes in no petticoats, but in armour of complete steel!" said young De la Pole. "One of our prisoners saw her vault from the ground upon her horse like the hardiest knight that ever mounted, and wield all her arms as dexterously as Sir John himself when he was at the empress's tournament at Cologne."

"Well, let us hear what she hath to say," resumed Suffolk. "It will not strike us with the palsy, nor wither our arms, nor change us to wild beasts of the forest, but to hear her words from a Christian mouth!"

"Nay, by my advice, let us neither see nor hear aught from her," said the Lord Scales, somewhat tremulously.

"What, Scales has caught this white-faced lethargy!" exclaimed Talbot. "Let us see and hear all that we may and can, and not like our grandame's white cow for our grandsire's ghost in the dark! Let come these heralds, Alexander: the earl will see them."

Considerably sobered in his mood, the young knight retired to give the messengers the requisite permission. They were waiting in a chamber below, and almost immediately afterwards made their appearance.

The garb of these officials might reasonably have excited wonder, even in members of their fantastic profession. They wore long robes of the finest white linen, with a surcoat of white velvet sown with

fleurs-de-lys, emblazoned at the breast with a huge crimson heart pierced with arrows, so set as to represent a glory. The principal of the two carried in one hand a naked sword, in the other a branch of olive.

"Welcome, heralds!—or are ye the merry-andrews of a fair?" said Talbot.

"Speak we with the earl of Suffolk, noble sire?" returned the herald.

"A witch's messenger should have eyes at his fingers' ends, to search in dark corners, and know without asking matters," replied Talbot. "I am not so famous an earl, but a baron of battle-creation; yet I bear a name with which they say French mothers affright their froward babes to stillness."

"The great Talbot, that should be?" replied the herald, with a startled look at the veteran hero.

"The little Talbot, if thou ratest him by bulk—at least, not a mere bullock of bone and sinew, which doubtless thou seekest with those starting crab's eyes," returned Talbot.

"I marvelled but that the shadow should be so vast, and the substance so slight," said the French herald, boldly. "But now, hear tidings of God and the Maid."

"Let them be civil, then. What is thy name?" said the earl of Suffolk.

"Orleans—that shall be king-of-arms in Rheims!" replied the herald, with a joyful flush that denoted he was a thorough convert to the prophetess whose message he came to deliver. "Now, listen, king of England, and you, duke of Bedford, who call yourself regent of the kingdom of France; you, William de la Pole, earl of Suffolk; you, John, Lord Talbot; and you, Thomas, Lord Scales, who call yourselves lieutenants of the said duke of Bedford; render submission to the King of kings! Restore to the Maid who is sent by God, the King of Heaven, the keys of all the good towns ye have taken and ravaged in France. God has sent her to restore the glory and inheritance of France. Most willing is she to give you peace, if ye will hear reason, lay down whatever ye have wrongfully despoiled in France, and pay for the harms ye have already done. And ye, archers, companies of war, gentles, and others, in siege before the town of Orleans, depart into your country, in the name of God, or look to hear such tidings of the Maid as shall make ye grieve that ye abided her coming here! King of England, if thus thou dost not, I, Jeanne, am the leader of battle, and wherever I meet your people in France; be they willing or unwilling, I will force them to depart; or if they refuse, I will slay and utterly destroy them all. I am sent by God, the King of Heaven, body to body, to thrust ye out of all France, but if you obey, I will take ye into mercy and good friendship. And be not obstinate, for you shall not keep the realm of France, witness Jesus, the King of Heaven, and son of Mary! The Dauphin, Charles, its true inheritor, shall possess it; for God, the mightiest, hath so decreed, and so hath revealed His will to the Maid: he shall enter Paris with a noble company!"

"Here is a precious cart-load of stony words turned all into our ears at once!" exclaimed Talbot, when the herald paused for breath. "But is there more?"

"If ye believe not these tidings from Heaven and the Maid," continued the herald, "this more am I to add: wherever we find you, we will pour upon ye, and make so wild a Ha-ha! among your ranks as hath not, for a thousand years, been seen in warlike France. And know for certain, that the Mighty One will give more power to the Maid and those she leads, than all resistance, marched all England to the rescue! And on the day of battle, it shall be seen which hath the better right to France—her children, or strangers. Duke of Bedford! the Maid prays and requires you to destroy no more. Do justice, and yet ye of England may go in her company to do the most glorious achievement that ever yet hath been done in Christendom. And now, answer whether ye will make a gentle peace with the city of Orleans, for if ye do not, in brief time great harms will there befall you. Thus from the Maid, noble messires."

The herald was silent, and so was the whole audience for several moments, with amazement.

"What, nothing else; nothing more from prating Joan?" said Talbot, at length. "Hark, Bedford! canst thou hear this loud talk in Paris? Dost thou quake at it? The king of England?—rogue! beware lest thou startle the bones of Henry the Fifth from their cerements in Westminster. What king of England dost thou speak to? Our child, our baby, whom we will crown in Paris when we have made our peace in Orleans! Oh, such peace! God give me defeat and ruin and slaughter, and a vile death by French hands, if I leave so much of Orleans together as shall mark where it has been! Ay, ay, but 'tis a woman talks to a child. She will slap our little king, no doubt, when she hath *him* at mercy! What, she will give us mercy?—marry, not till we ask it, I do implore this Maid of yours, on my bended knees! Tell her Talbot kneels, that never thought to do so but on his tomb or to his king! And what achievement is this we are all to do together? Oh, by my life, I have thought of it, and if it come not speedily, this same will even burst my heart, for lack of blows to vent it in."

"When will this devil's paramour—this Maid of your's—approach us?" said Sir John Fastolfe, in a low tone that strongly contrasted with the angry accents of Talbot.

"Thus she bade me reply, 'Better to-day than to-morrow, better to-morrow than later!'" replied the herald.

"A learned herald, that may only utter what is put into his mouth like a trumpet," said Sir Thomas Gladesdale. "Yet I'll wager me, he would blazon us our Lord's coat armour as wisely as any man! Tell the Maid from me, I will make her welcome to my tent, an she will come without her steel petticoats. There is no devil in any woman that Gladesdale cannot tame."

"But this is an angel, Sir Thomas Gladesdale," returned the fanatic herald. "And for thy blasphemy, I tell thee, never shalt thou depart alive from her presence when ye meet."

"Dost thou share her gifts? canst thou prophesy too? why then, by that Heaven she keeps ringing in our ears, thou shalt share her rewards," shouted Talbot. "Take hence these wizard messengers and burn them, as we will the hag their mistress, when we catch her."

"I am ready, do your worst!" returned the undaunted herald.

"Nay, Talbot, we may not offer harm to a man of his office," interposed Suffolk. "It would shame us before all knighthood."

"I have but spoken the truth. Burn me if indeed all that I have said comes not to pass!" said the herald.

"So be it: and Sir John Fastolfe shall have the custody of him, for he it is that chiefly avers this Joan to be a witch," returned Talbot, laughing bitterly. "Orleans, that shall be Rheims! thou shalt tarry with us until thy lady comes for thee, and thy fellow shall return to her to bid her go back to her cow-keeping, or come hither and be grilled with her harbinger."

CHAPTER XIII.

ORLEANS.

"But you, that are polluted with your lusts,
Stain'd with the guiltless blood of innocents,
Corrupt and tainted with a thousand vices,
Because you want the grace that others have,
You judge it straight a thing impossible
To compass wonders, but by help of devils."—*Henry VI.*

While thus Jeanne d'Arc spread terror as a sorceress through the English camp, she was almost worshipped as a divinely-inspired prophetess by the soldiery of France, and its enthusiastic populations. And not the least of the miracles destined to be wrought by the heroic peasant girl, was the unanimity which prevailed among all parties at the court concerning her. Envy was mute, and even ridicule silenced beneath the sway of the mingled grandeur and simplicity of a nature which excited so many hopes and so few fears. The despairing and voluptuous king himself was roused to exertion; the beauteous Agnes stifled a vague dread of the woman in her admiration of the warrior; the jealous La Trimouille closed, for an instant, all the hundred eyes of his suspicions.

Powerful motives were no doubt at work that aided the effect produced by the appearance of so bright and pure a luminary in those alien skies. The desperation to which things were reduced made any chance of relief, however wild, be clutched at with avidity. Agnes Sorel loved the king, but with an ambitious and haughty spirit that required him to continue a king to be loved, and her taste for magnificence and splendour gave her a gamester's recklessness of the means to attain them. The secret bitterness that dwelt in her heart at the degradation she had brought on a lofty name made her willing to hazard even the idol she had sacrificed it to, in order to deck it

with glories that might excuse the idolator. La Trimouille's hatred of the constable, his fears that necessity would else compel the king to receive him again, encouraged him to any venture that might restore the balance without his aid.

Much of Jeanne's sudden court favour was also to be ascribed to the influence of the archbishop of Rheims. His tried wisdom and pontifical rank gave him an authority, which he exerted unceasingly in her behalf. In addition to mundane motives of the most powerful nature, it could not but flatter the feelings of a churchman to offer France a deliverer, whose inspiration was so deeply tinged with a devotional spirit. The cogitations of the ambitious minister, of the rival statesman, might also be agreeably allured by the certainty that he possessed the means of governing the powers of the sublime mechanism thus set in motion.

The archbishop accompanied Jeanne to Poictiers, whither she was sent to be examined by the doctors of theology and prelates, who formed a considerable part of the parliament there assembled. A commission, chosen by Regnault from among the most devoted adherents of Charles VII., and presided over by himself, was not likely to pronounce unfavourably; but the eloquence, passion, and enthusiasm of the heroic girl won belief from many who came only to pretend to it. An unanimous judgment certified her divine mission, though cautiously worded, with an eye to very possible failure.

The people, however, had not waited for the decrees of doctors and theologians, to pronounce on the lawfulness of the grand patriotic impulse which brought them so marvellous a deliverer. The tidings roused the masses throughout France, as if by one electric shock of sympathy. The common people, who had looked on the struggle with much of the dismal indifference of an ox for which a wolf and panther contend, were stirred by the marvellous news, that one of their despised and brutalised order had been chosen by heaven to redeem France! The sympathy of class was roused. The superstition of the age gave unbounded scope to credulity; the reverence towards women, inspired by Celtic tradition, and by the worship of the Virgin, smoothed the way of the warlike prophetess. In an incredibly brief time, the renown of Jeanne d'Arc spread throughout the length and breadth of France. Hope revived instantaneously, as the flowers spring beneath the steps of a goddess, and three short weeks undid the labours of twenty years.

From Poictiers Jeanne was conveyed to Blois, where preparations for the relief of Orleans were actively advancing. A retinue was now assigned her; armour, horses, and attendants liberally provided. An old knight of good renown, called Jean d'Olun, a squire, pages, and Friar Richard, as confessor, formed the principal part of her attendants.

A large convoy of provisions was nearly in readiness, furnished either by the new zeal of the towns, or the gold found by the argentier in his magic coffers of credit. A resolute host was assembled, consisting chiefly of volunteers, attracted by curiosity and

enthusiasm, to combat under a supernatural leader. The famous generals and nobles who were appointed to lead these forces, were mostly animated by a different spirit, but conducing to the same end. The ferocious Marshal de Raix, and the milder Saint Sevère, were equally glad to be rid of the sway of the duke of Alençon, whom they disliked for different reasons. Neither expected that a woman would presume to exert authority in military matters, or that the glory of success would be attributed to her. Hatred and wrath against the conquerors, who had stripped so many among them of vast wealth and sway, disposed the rest to welcome an oracle that promised vengeance and restoration.

The archbishop felt that now the most hazardous period of his charge's probation had arrived. Surrounded by the lustre and licence of a camp, youthful, and endowed with beauty of a wild and rustic order, indeed, but of a grand and almost unknown kind, in its irradiation of genius and high thought, there was reason enough for apprehension. But the heroic severity and silence of Jeanne's manner surrounded her with an atmosphere into which the boldest feared to break. Reserved, and seemingly lost in visionary musings, save when some topic was touched that related to the great object of her mission, the archbishop then observed with delight and wonder, the change which came over his heroine. Her brooding and dreamy contemplativeness vanished, and she spoke with the authority and decision of one born to command and guide. The oldest captains listened with amazement to the opinions she delivered on their science, and found fault only with the extraordinary boldness of her plans.

A new sign came over the aspect of the times, and had the generals of Charles VII. shrunk from the dangerous toil before them, they could no longer retract. The fire of that heroic spirit had fallen, and kindled the commonest clay. The French soldiery, lately so despairing, who could scarcely be induced to face the English when they stood ten to one, now longed only to be led to battle against them, in whatever number arrayed. The meanest believed himself visibly supported by Heaven in the person of the maiden of Domremy. Generous and chivalric feeling revived in the souls of the French knighthood when they beheld a woman dare the peril from which they had shrunk. The army for the relief of Orleans assembled at Blois, in numbers far exceeding the most sanguine hopes of the master mechanists, and composed of far better materials than of late the discomfited ranks of France had mustered.

To be led directly against the English, and against that Talbot, whose name had so long been the terror of France, was the constant entreaty and desire of the maiden-general. But dread of that renowned soldier and his host was not yet put out of the calculations of the French leaders, as it was by the flaming enthusiasm of the people. Moreover, there was probably some desire on the part of the marshals to show the world that military prudence had as much to do as inspiration in the expected triumphs.

The last fear of the archbishop now remained to be essayed, that

the woman-heart of Jeanne d'Arc might fail her when she came to encounter the actual horrors of conflict. But the joyful serenity with which, in the presence of the whole army, she knelt to receive his parting blessing,—the bright lightning flash of exultation that streamed from her eyes when, leaping on her charger's back, she unfurled her banner for the first time amidst the deafening shouts of her troops,—tranquillized him on this head. He had only to stifle the deep inward pang of remorse he could not but feel when the devoted championess rode forth on her terrible enterprise; and with the usual anodynes that statesmen and rulers lay to their consciences, he managed it.

Much against his secret wish, Friar Richard was obliged to accompany the march of the troops. He was personally not very valiant; but he felt he had staked too much now to draw back, if he would reap the fruits of his enterprising ingenuity. Yet he was perhaps the only one that went with a faltering and uncertain heart, to the relief of Orleans, of all the host; and yet he might be said, in one sense, to be the motive power of the whole.

The captains persuaded Jeanne that they were leading her against the main siege of the English, instead of which, they advanced on the southern shore of the river, and avoided any risk of obstruction by taking a wide circuit through the forest of Orleans. None of them expected the display of fiery wrath and indignation into which Jeanne burst when, arriving on the outskirts of the forest, the convoy and army halted, and it was explained to her that they must await the arrival of Dunois from the opposite shores of the Loire to ascertain if it would be possible to convey the provisions into the city. Dunois himself was astonished when, dexterously eluding the observation of the besiegers, he arrived at the place of appointment, and found Jeanne administering sharp and fierce rebukes to her deceivers.

"Bastard of Orleans!" she exclaimed as soon as she saw him. "Is it you that gave counsel I should be brought hither, and not full shock on the English and Talbot?"

"I and others wiser gave that counsel, Jeanne, believing it wiser and safer," replied Dunois.

"In God's name, the counsel of heaven is wiser and safer than yours!" she returned with flashing eyes. "I brought you a nobler succour than ever yet came to soldier or city—and ye have rejected it!"

"It is true," said Dunois, dejectedly turning to the two marshals. "The Loire is flooded, at an unusual season of the year, and the force of the current is such that heavily-laden boats can only mount it by strength of sail—the oar is powerless! But lo, the wind is against us, and Fastolfe may by this time have heard of our tidings, beneath whose strongly fortified bastille we must pass, with a slow herd of bestial and corn-carts! The pause will give time for the English to pour in upon us from all sides—so ye must needs make the best of your way back to Blois!"

"Then will relief never more approach Orleans," exclaimed Friar

Richard, in an agony of disappointment that overcame his physical fears.

"Is Fastolfe yonder—yonder in the ruined abbey, surrounded by walls and mounds of earth?" said Jeanne d'Arc, pointing to St, Loup, with her sheathed sword, and with dilating nostrils. "Halt! the false manslayer dares never meet me in the field! He knows that victory is given to me! And what say you of the winds? Behold they change—see ye not my plume waves towards Orleans? Let the boats descend; we shall have wind enough to mount against the waters!"

It was even so. By no miracle, but the prescience acquired by her habits of observation as a shepherdess, Jeanne d'Arc perceived that the wind was rapidly shifting in the desired direction. But it appeared so unhoped and singular an event, that the spectators were struck as if with a visible prodigy.

"Let us march—God is with us!" exclaimed Dunois. "Send an arrow aloft with a trail of crimson silk, which is to be the signal to our boatmen in Orleans, and let us on to St. Loup!"

It was now the second day since Fastolfe had taken possession of his quarters at St. Loup. He found the massive ruin in excellent military order, as it had been left by the Burgundians, planned apparently with all possible strengths and defences known to the science of the age. But his soldiers perceived that their captain applied his attention as if against the spiritual foes they already so much apprehended. He caused numerous masses to be said, in which yet he did not join, to the repose of the defunct whose violated tombs were around them. He ordered Jeanne's herald to be bound in massive irons, and kept him prisoner in the vaults of the abbey—and yet was continually questioning him about her doings! The whole circuit of the fortification he caused to be daily sprinkled with holy water, and prayers offered at the chief points against the power of the enemy of mankind. All in vain! for when suddenly the convoy of provisions with its attendant army poured from the forest of Orleans, and approached the bastille of St. Loup, so panic a terror assailed every heart, that even the sentinels on the ramparts made no attempt to give the alarm, but stared aghast until nearly the whole mass of the defenders crowded up on the ramparts.

There was, indeed, something of magic in the abrupt apparition of this numerous host, so well covered was the march, or so negligent the English watch. It seemed as if the ground had yawned and cast up an armed multitude escorting so great a supply of provisions, in the shape of heaped waggons of corn, herds of oxen, sheep, and hogs, that it was scarcely reasonable to think it could have been collected in so short a time. Much more, in a country apparently drained of its products to feed a hostile army during more than six months. At the same time, the river became covered with a flotilla of the large, flatbottomed boats of the Loire, urged by the violent course of the stream, and as if by some supernatural behest, the wind had chopped round so as to facilitate the manœuvres necessary in approaching the shore, and re-ascending the waters.

It was no great wonder that Fastolfe and his men stood motionlessly gazing from their ramparts, without even attempting the discharge of a culverin. And when at length he spoke of a sally—of a charge on the flank of the relieving host—it was too late, for they were drawn up in battle-array, outnumbering his own force by several thousands. He bade the cannoneers discharge their pieces, and the archers their arrows, but it seemed as if they had lost all sense and faculty of obedience. The mysterious silence and offencelessness of the French host contributed to the general terror. No word was spoken, no shaft discharged: it seemed to the appalled English that they depended on other weapons than any they wielded, and that on the least provocation the air would be filled with flying serpents and showers of red-hot hail, for these were the least of the tribulations the soldiery expected. The roar and cries of the poor cattle driven with reckless haste on board the boats, and the shouts of the drivers, composed what seemed a Babel of unearthly sounds. Fastolfe himself—advancing and snatching the lighted linstock from two paralysed engineers, as if to discharge a culverin levelled at the shore—suddenly was seized with the like powerlessness. And this was at the instant when the ordealist of the Fairy Tree of Domremy first appeared in sight.

Rarely, indeed, has any merely human appearance presented characteristics so seemingly preternatural as this of the Maid of Orleans on the first scene of her glory. She was mounted on a lofty snow-white charger, full of fire and impatience, which she sat with a dignity and ease that permanently widened the verdurer's mouth with gaping wonderment. She wore the usual accoutrements of a knight, being sheathed in richly-wrought armour of light plates, from head to heel, with a surcoat of sky-blue silver damask that descended to her knees. A lofty plume of snow-white feathers, in a cap of steel without a vizor, left her countenance visible—and it was wild and wrathful as that of an avenging destiny! She was armed with a massive sword in a sheath of crimson velvet, sown with fleurs-de-lys, and on the point of a lance of extraordinary height she carried her consecrated standard—consecrated by the primate of France, and wrought by a queen. It was of white satin, having on one side a figure of Christ on a rainbow; on the other, of the Virgin Mary sitting between two angels who held up to her a shield of the arms of France. JHESUS MARIA, in letters of gold, rimmed both these devices.

Thus arrayed, Jeanne d'Arc rode slowly to the bank of the Loire—darting an angry glance at the bastille as she passed it, that curdled the gazer's blood. Dunois and the two marshals rode beside her, and her approach quickened the zeal of all employed to an emulous fury of diligence. Glittering in the clear sunset of the spring evening, she urged her steed until the waves of the Loire bathed its hot hoofs, and gazed intently at the opposite city—the loadstar of her heroic visions. Meanwhile, the preparations continued unflaggingly: the French generals, though amazed at the inaction of the English ones, seized their advantage with the national promptitude.

Whether the surrounding and opposite English forts imagined that some notable stratagem of war was veiled under the silence of Fastolfe, or a similar panic had overtaken them, could only be guessed. Talbot's fortification of St. Laurent began indeed to throw out some bodies of archers and lancemen; but they had not boats enough to attempt crossing the stream, if even they had good will to the enterprise. The current was, besides, of almost irresistible violence, owing to the flood, which greatly increased its natural force. Consequently, the whole of the victualling was embarked in a very brief period; and, stretching every sail and bending every oar, with a shout of "Vive la Pucelle!" echoed in thunders of joy and triumph from the city, the flotilla rushed up the river, against the current, as if urged by magic pressure.

"And now, noble maid, your task is done for the present—Orleans is saved from famine, at least!" exclaimed Dunois. "Return to Blois with the troops, for there only can men-at-arms cross the Loire in a mass, and so in safety; and come and seek us on the English side, for I will no longer doubt your governance in aught!"

"No, my Lord Bastard; for hearken, ye have done your own counsel, and I will do mine," replied Jeanne—and Dunois perceived that her eyes, so lately burning with angry fire, were filled with tears. "I hear the joyful greeting of the citizens of Orleans—I see its towers before my gaze as often as I have seen them in my visions—though then they were fashioned of silver in the white morning clouds! and never again will I lose sight of them till they are redeemed from their enemies' grasp. I see well, indeed, as you say, that we cannot break up our host and cross in parties, with foes on both shores; so let the marshals lead back our force to Blois—I will to Orleans! And there, I nothing doubt me, my soldiers will come and seek me whether their leaders will it or not, and I am weary of wrangling with them!"

Dunois eagerly closed with this offer, which insured him the return of the relief, otherwise sufficiently doubtful. The troops, however, murmured and showed signs of extreme unwillingness to part with their prophetess, until she herself, riding from rank to rank, commanded them to return to Blois without delay, and thence to meet her on the opposite shore, before Orleans.

"By my head, Saint Sevère," whispered the Marshal de Raix to his colleague, "a woman's little finger will soon have more sway than our batons among these foolish rogues!"

"So much the better, if it guides them more wisely than our batons," replied the more generous leader.

The convoy awaited until Dunois, the Maid, and their retinue, had embarked, and disappeared beneath the arches of the bridge of Orleans. Then, for the first time, the Tournelles showed signs of existence, and a shower of arrows vainly covered the wake of Jeanne's barque, while a joyous uproar, that seemed to fill heaven and earth, arose in Orleans. The citizens, who had that day purposely shown slackness and sadness in all their movements, now proved on what account. The deserted streets became suddenly filled; every culverin

uttered its thunder-shout of welcome, every bell of the city, as if stirred by sympathy, joined in a merry peal; and the river-ramparts became animate with a vast throng, whose enthusiasm vented itself in a long-protracted vivat that drowned every other sound while it lasted.

CHAPTER XIV.

ORLEANS.

"Was Mahomet inspired by a dove?
Thou with an eagle art inspired then!"—*Shakspeare.*

Truly did Napoleon declare—in spite of all his own mathematical genius—that mankind are governed by the imagination. This singular entry of the Maid into the city, whence she was to derive her glorious cognomen, at the same instant confirmed the English in their panic terror of a witch, and the French in their belief that a saint, commissioned by God, had arrived to their deliverance. From this hour it seemed as if the English and French had changed characters, fortune, and position.

It was time that some assistance, divine or human, should enter Orleans. The womanly, though warlike, heart of Jeanne d'Arc bled in her bosom, and her eyes filled continually with pitying tears, as she gazed on the haggard faces and wasted forms of the majority of that population which rushed to welcome her with raving transports of joy and gratitude. Had she descended visibly from the skies, armed with lightning in their behalf, she could not have been received with more reverence and hopeful trust. The people knelt before her as she approached, kissed her robes and harness, lifted up their infants for her to bless; men, women, and children, alike sobbing and heaping blessings on her head. She repulsed these acts of adoration with gentle but grave reproof, and herself not ceasing to flow with tears, exhorted the hearers to courage and calmness. "Even thus pale and glassy-eyed I saw ye in my dreams!" she exclaimed. "But, O ye men of Orleans, at least! not weeping, not weeping!—Ye made your enemies weep for ye tears of blood, when yet ye hoped little; and now, when I am come among ye, when redemption is certain—" But her own voice failed, too, in the reproach.

The magistrates and principal burgesses of Orleans advanced to welcome her, bearing torches, for it was now night. The bailiff and the aged seneschal, whom she had seen in Chinon, could not utter their congratulatory speech for emotion and joy. But they knelt on the narrow causeway, and covered the hand she stretched to raise them with tears and kisses. "Nay, nay, messieurs! this must not be; only to our royal king is such homage due!" she said. "Arise, if ye would not force me to leave my saddle and kneel to your gray hairs, my fathers, for pardon that I should make you weep thus!" And gently disengaging her hand, she passed on, and the crowd that

yielded to her advance like waves, like waves continued to flow in and follow in her way.

The wives of the richer citizens flocked to offer her presents of great value, thanking her for having redeemed the honour of their daughters from violation by their foes. When these were of bulk or great value Jeanne courteously rejected them, and the rest she delivered to Friar Richard, who took care to be always at her side, to be used in masses and charitable works. For herself she refused all earthly recompense, but such as her king might deem her to deserve and confer. There was a lofty kind of dependence in this—or some other profounder sentiment, as yet unfathomed in her deep-passioned spirit—that made the idea of meriting the gratitude of the young monarch more pleasing to her than that of all mankind beside.

Attended by nearly the whole population of Orleans and all its chivalry, Jeanne proceeded to the ancient cathedral, and offered up thanks for her safe arrival and success. The overflowing devotion of her own heart would have suggested this alone, but Friar Richard had a dread of the progress of the English scandals, which induced him to urge every opportunity of refuting them. After this rite had been duly performed, Dunois escorted his marvellous guest to the house of the treasurer of Orleans, where she was to lodge. Jeanne herself selected this residence because she learned that the official had a wife and daughter, and was pleased with their appearance when they pressed among the rest to welcome her; and it happened that the treasurer's house was in a street near the Porte Regnart, which opened on the country dominated by Talbot's fortification of St. Laurent.

The captains of the French army, meanwhile, debated among themselves, what was proper to be done, not thinking it necessary to consult a country girl, however much inspired, on their military arrangements. It was determined, that the Bastard of Orleans should depart on the following day to meet the army from Blois, and lead it safely into the city. The other commanders were to stay in Orleans, and restrain the rash daring of the people and of their new leader until his return.

This determination was communicated to Jeanne d'Arc, but not another which the gallant La Hire and Poton de Saintrailles resolved upon. It was usual to celebrate the arrival of any personage of extraordinary rank in a besieged city by some sally or onslaught that marked the increase of good cheer within; and these two famous partisans agreed to treat the English, in the bastille of St. Laurent, to a skirmish, in honour of the arrival of the Maid. At the same time it would serve to cover the departure of Dunois. But dreading her impetuous temper and sudden influence over the populace, they promised not to reveal their purpose to Jeanne until it should be accomplished.

It might be that the Maid perceived with inward dissatisfaction the species of tutelage to which it seemed intended to reduce herself and her mission. Her daring and resolution had signally foiled the first attempt, and vindicated in her own eyes the reality of her

celestial inspiration. But not the less did the proud spirit chafe in the consciousness of a yoke, and the supremacy of the military genius that glowed within her burned to assert itself. But her manners resumed their natural tone of grave gentleness when installed for the night in the house of the worthy treasurer of Orleans.

It was not easy to sustain the dignity of a prophetess in the familiar intercourse of common life, and yet without attempting it Jeanne succeeded with her hostess and her daughter, the only persons she allowed access beside her attendants. The fiery simplicity of her discourse, her deep devotion, answered well to an ideal that united at once the priestess and the warrior. The treasurer's wife and his daughter were women of piety and sense; but, whether influenced by the amazing circumstances of the case or not, looked upon Jeanne as superhuman after they had dined with her! Her sobriety and temperance were indeed remarkable, but not those of a miraculous being.

Or if the younger hostess cherished any doubt of the deliverer's sharing the common weaknesses of humanity, it was when she listened to the passionate tenderness and enthusiasm of all Jeanne said concerning the young king, in whose cause she was in arms. The splendours of her imagination decked him with unreal attributes, the gorgeousness of the temple made the god! The wife of the treasurer of Orleans, with all her piety, was a woman, and one who knew the court and world, and she sighed and wondered, without daring to dispel the vision, at the extraordinary admiration entertained by Jeanne for her king, and the glorious qualities she had discovered in him. Perhaps Dame Boucher imagined the holy maiden was bedazzled with a splendid illusion, by express appointment from above, in order that her zeal might not be chilled in the task of redemption by disgust. But her daughter inwardly bemused whether the same authority had not decreed that a love—pure, sublimed, empassioned as light—should sustain the inspiration of that mighty heart and intellect, unconsciously even to herself?

Jeanne was unwearied with her day of fatigue and emotion, or at least, when speaking on this subject, she seemed so. But her hostess judiciously thought otherwise, and retired early, leaving her to repose, with her daughter for a companion in her couch. It was the maiden's custom always, where it was possible, to sleep with one of her own sex, and where it was not, to spend the night in her warlike harness. Jeanne's attendants were, however, completely exhausted, and especially the old knight who guarded her, and whose office it was to put on her armour.

The Chevalier d'Olun was accordingly still plunged in deep sleep, on his couch in the ante-chamber to that occupied by Jeanne d'Arc, when shortly after daybreak he was awakened by her voice. "What are those shouts?" he heard her exclaim. "To arms! rescue! It is Fastolfe! Give me mine armour!"

The old knight indeed heard a distant uproar and outcries, which his experience interpreted into those of conflict; but before he could equip to appear before his charge, she was nearly clothed in her arms, with the affrighted but active aid of the treasurer's daughter. The

words of strife became now joined with others for aid, and yells of terror and flight. Never before had the young championess heard the direful noise of human battle and agony; but she paused not even to attend to the knight's entreaty that she would remain until he could learn the cause of the disturbance. "The blood of France is being shed! Those cries were taught by French mothers! My horse!—where is my horse?"

She rushed down the stairs of the treasurer's house, regardless of the weight of her armour, which at other times galled limbs unaccustomed to confinement and heavy garniture. Her quick and intelligent page, Louis de Culant, had already saddled her steed, but with boyish presumption rode it to the door. "Ha, traitor page!" she exclaimed, rending him from the saddle, "Art thou too of the conspiracy? Who bade thee hide the truth from me? My standard?—bring me my standard!"

She had left it in the sleeping-chamber above; but almost as rapidly as she could vault up and seat herself in her saddle, Louis de Culant handed out the standard by its long lance from the window. The effect of those fiercely sparkling eyes and lighted countenance was not such as encouraged delays. Snatching it from the page's grasp, and setting spurs to her horse, Jeanne galloped up the street at such furious speed that the sparks flew from its hoofs as from a blacksmith's anvil.

It was afterwards quoted as a miracle, we know not wherefore, unless from the vulgar love of exaggeration, that Jeanne took the nearest way to the scene of conflict. It is true that the streets were perplexed and winding, and never before traversed by her. But the uproar increased so fearfully with every move of her advance, that it was in no degree wonderful she made direct to the scene of action. This was the Porte Regnart.

After escorting Dunois to some distance beyond the English lines, and renewing their promises of caution, La Hire and Poton de Saintrailles, came back with a chosen company of chivalry. Arriving opposite the great fortification of St. Laurent, they challenged Talbot and his knights to come forth and meet them, with insulting gestures and mockery.

But the mysterious terror kindled in the hearts of the English soldiery by the events of the preceding day had spread beyond the legions who first betrayed it. Nay, the inexplicable want of conduct and courage displayed by so renowned a leader as Sir John Fastolfe heightened the feeling into one of utter dismay. Talbot himself, whose soldiery, while they loved, feared him more than any enemy hitherto, showed so much reluctance to stir from their entrenchments, that it was not until he sallied forth almost alone against the French detachment that shame and regard for their general overcame their fears. Then finding that the dreaded sorceress was nowhere visible, and encouraged by the valour of their commander, the men-at-arms speedily resumed their English daring, and charged their foes with fury. A hot combat ensued; but all the new French confidence could not sustain the troops of La Hire and Poton against the

repeated shocks of Talbot. In vain also did the townspeople endeavour with shouts, and the discharge of a few ill-directed cannons, to arrest the pursuit that followed. So rapid and energetic was it, that the probability was, very few would return to the city with tidings, when Jeanne rushed from the Porte Regnart, followed by an incredible multitude of the armed populace of Orleans.

In galloping towards the Porte Regnart, she encountered some soldiery hurrying along with the shattered body of a young knight. It was the first time she had seen human blood thus shed—the human form so hideously marred,—and she checked her horse with sudden horror, as if some monstrous snake had risen on her path. Her black hair deepened in hue with the glossy damp that burst upon it, while with white and quivering lips she exclaimed, "Is it French blood? Are these mangled limbs French? Oh, blood of France, well shalt thou be avenged!" And her mood changing into one of wrathful indignation, and rending her sword from the scabbard, she continued, "Ho, there, all men to arms! Vengeance for the blood of France!"

The noise of the skirmish and the alarum-bell of a neighbouring church had already attracted a great number of the citizens and populace to the Porte Regnart. But they were without leaders, and appalled with the flight and discomfiture of the chivalry outside the walls. The instant, however, it was known that the martial prophetess was approaching the field—when she was seen rushing past with the speed of a thunderbolt, and her sword flashing over her head like the lightning that accompanies it—an embodiment as it were of the tempest—one universal cry of "Vengeance!" echoed hers, one universal rush of onset followed in her wake. And thus she came from the Porte Regnart, meeting the yelling fugitives of La Hire, and full in sight of them and their pursuers. The immediate effect produced might well indeed be ascribed to magic. The pursuers halted with a dead shock, many being unhorsed by the violent reversion of their own speed; lances dropped from nerveless hands: the mighty Talbot himself paused in amazement!

The fugitives meanwhile whirled their steeds round. La Hire and Poton, who were galloping breathlessly with the rest, turned at equal speed to meet their adversaries. A knight of St. John of Jerusalem, who fought on the French side, lay on the ground between the two parties, unhorsed by the lance of Talbot; and an English squire was busied, according to warlike custom in those days, in unlacing the knight's helmet to complete his master's work, by striking off his head. But the squire himself suddenly rolled to earth beneath the tramp of Jeanne d'Arc's steed, and the knight started upon his feet in all his weight of arms! This seemingly supernatural event completed the consternation of the English soldiers. Talbot was left completely alone, by a broad space, on the field, and his troops retreated in huddling masses to the fortifications of St. Laurent. Nothing was left to Talbot himself but to retire, or remain to be surrounded by his enemies; and with a shout of frantic rage, and setting his lance as if he meant to run amuck among his own fear-struck

host, he set his horse to its speed, and entered the bastille of St. Laurent with the last of his late valiant sortie.

"Oh, by the tree of God, Jeanne, thou art a better brother-in-arms than any that never wore a *jupon!*" exclaimed La Hire. "I do believe in thee—thou art both Oliver and Roland! But now let us return into Orleans, for I am sore hurt—by our Lady and God forgive me!—in the back, and yonder old mad leopard will bring out his cubs, or brain them all in a brief while!"

"Thou art such an evil speaker and swearer, La Hire, that 'tis no wonder Heaven leaves you at your worst pinches," repled Jeanne, with indignation. "Return into the city and get thyself confessed and shriven of thy sin, for never until then will I ride again in thy company. For me, since I am abroad in the fields, I will take my disport, and look at the whole range of these forts and compassing host, for our Lady may, perhaps, give me grace to spy some weaker link in this heavy chain."

La Hire felt the rebuke, and promised, with some discontent, that, as soon as his hurt was looked to, he would make his peace with the saints whose names he so frequently abused; and the knight of St. John, who was much bruised, was supported by two esquires into Orleans, in his company. The intention of Jeanne d'Arc was meanwhile generally reported, and an immense escort of the citizens and men-at-arms prepared to follow her on what our modern adepts style a *reconnaissance*. This attendance she did not desire, but could not prevent; and Jeanne was about to commence the survey by approaching the ditches and lofty mounds of the bastille of St. Laurent, when the Marshal de Raix arrived, much vexed at the success of this first deed of arms in which he had no part, seized the bridle of her horse, and peremptorily declared that every one should return to Orleans. "What want you out of the walls, maiden?" he said. "What can a shepherd girl see or understand—for saints, methinks, have little skill in arms—that you should go gadding among the culverins and ditches of our enemies? I am answerable to the king for your safety, and you shall not go, nor any in your company."

"It shall be seen," replied Jeanne, passionately; "nor are you the judge of what is fitting to be seen or done by me, mareschal of France, but not of the hosts of Him who sends me! Let go my bridle, or—nay, I am not so easily made a prisoner;" and drawing her sword across the mouth-harness of her steed, and touching it lightly with her spur, she left the bridle in De Raix's hand, and rode calmly towards St. Laurent.

It is very probable that the ferocious De Raix, whose enormous crimes and violences afterwards brought him to an ignominious death, would have returned into Orleans, and shut the gates on the Maid. At least so much he muttered in his teeth, and in the hearing of Friar Richard, who, learning the commotion and triumph, made his appearance with a large crucifix in hand. But, encouraged by observing that nearly the whole mass of the people of Orleans followed in the train of his charge, he ventured to adhere to his intention of accompanying her with this holy ensign, as a visible refutation of the English calum-

nies; for it was supposed in general that witches and other professors of unsanctified arts could not sustain the presence of the blessed emblem of redemption. But the sight of it borne aloft in the procession beside her only assured the English of the potency of the sorceress who could resist so mighty an influence.

Attended by the enthusiastic and half-frantic population accordingly, Jeanne d'Arc made a complete tour of the besiegers' works, extending round the entire city, on the north of the Loire. Those who were not aware of the obedience and almost affection to which Jeanne had brought her snowy and finely-bred charger, so that it seemed to follow the movement of her will, imagined that an invisible spirit of some sort led it so tranquilly and unbridled to the spots she desired to visit. She reviewed the whole line of the English fortifications, their chief points of vantage and strength, with the rapid intelligence of that principle which preceded and created science,—genius: and a military genius of the highest order, untaught by rules or precept, undoubtedly presided over the inspiration of the musing shepherdess of Lorraine.

The way led repeatedly amidst glades, and outskirts of the great forest of Orleans, and the sight of the blossoming trees seemed to recal some recollection to the heart of Jeanne d'Arc. "It is the first of May, the day of the feast of a beautiful tree in my land!" she said. "Let us gather green boughs and garlands in its honour; look, I will wreathe my brows and my steed's arched neck with the white beech-blossom, and do ye all likewise."

It was enough that Jeanne did anything, to procure innumerable imitators; and as the escort passed the besiegers' batteries and mounds, it resembled a peaceful crowd of villagers returned from maying in the woods. But the English imagined some terrible magic ceremony was being performed, which thus completely circled them into destruction. Not a single arrow or gun was discharged at the passing multitude, far less anything so rash as a sally attempted; and infinitely to the surprise of all the men-at-arms who followed in it, the whole procession returned in triumph into the city by the opposite gate to that whence they had started. The citizens, who had beheld nothing green but at a distance for months, hung the doors and churches with their verdant spoil, amidst the joyful plaudits of the women and children, who pressed everywhere to scent the flowers and bathed them in tears of delight.

Not satisfied with the inspection of the exterior strength of her enemies, the Maid proceeded to view the besiegers' line of attack along the Loire. Still followed by acclaiming thousands, she traversed the streets, emerging at all convenient openings and watergates in the ramparts to survey the opposite shore, until she fronted the great bastille of the Augustins, called by the English London, which formed the resting-point of the whole blockade in the east, connected by a ditch and rampart with the suburb of Orleans and the main power of the English in the castle of the Tournelles. Jeanne then announced her intention of taking as near a view as possible of this last important position, and proceeded along the bridge towards the great bas-

tion erected by the besieged after the loss of the Tournelles. This bulwark, two broken arches of the bridge, and the incessant exertions of Maître Jean, the cannoneer, maintained the post against the unwearied efforts of the English commanders to force a way into the city through it.

The approaching tramp of the multitude startled Maître Jean from a species of doze into which he had fallen in the warm sun, upon the carriage of his great piece, called affectionately by him the "Baa-Lamb." Maître Jean had not yet seen the Maid, but he was prepared to believe in her, and for reasons in especial that had little to do with her proofs of a celestial mission. He heard that she was very curious and interested in all matters relating to what was even then styled artillery; and he knew that she was a native of a province that bordered on his own Lorraine. Jean scanned her person and bearing with an exceedingly favourable eye as she advanced, but the hail-fellow-well-met tone in which he was preparing to greet his countrywoman died away in respectful silence when once her eye fell upon him.

"I know you,—you are Maître Jean of Lorraine," she said, in a mild and winning tone. "You are one whom I have desired to see ever since I have beheld the marvellous engines whose fiery breath you govern and load with destruction. Men know not yet your worth, nor the wonders you may aid in compassing!"

"It is very true, madame," said Maître Jean, in raptures with this compliment. "And men never shall know, until they learn to speak as graciously and wisely as women that understand a matter ever do. Moreover, madame, mine is the very art for the exercise of women who lead in wars; for it needs not strength, but courage and dexterity, and I can strike, smite, and lay level towers and valiant men at such a distance that I need scarcely see the ruin I cause—which is good for women's tender eyes. It is therefore that the knights rail at me, and despise mine art, because they see that in the end it will destroy the need for their own."

"Would it might destroy itself in the end, with all other cruel and destroying knowledge! Meanwhile we must use the instrument heaven allots to us," said Jeanne, with a sigh; and gazing at the vast engine, she continued, "Would it might slumber ever thus, like a snake in winter; but it may not be, nor wot I whether ever the time of peace and brotherhood shall come on earth!"

"Jesu forbid, madame!" said the cannoneer, involuntarily. "But shall I let you see a trial of my skill? I guess certainly that there is some council of the English captains going on in the Tournelles; and though forbidden by the Marshal de Raix to alarm the city with needless discharges, I own you as my chief and leader in the war from this instant, and mayhap may be as lucky on your order as when I blew the cheek and half the brain of Salisbéri to the fiends!"

"No, cannoneer, for I would parley with them, and urge them perchance to hear reason, and depart without further pouring forth of Christian blood!" replied Jeanne. "Let some trumpet sound a parley. I will speak with them from the top of the bastion."

"All the saints together could not work such a miracle, madame!" exclaimed the astonished engineer.

"Their blood then be on their own heads! But call me not 'madame;' I am a shepherd-woman, and very lowly born," said Jeanne, unconsciously, not well pleased with the title, though one of the greatest respect, from its common-place application to persons distinguished only by it.

"But, glorious shepherdess, if you would speak reason with this herd of wolves from the bastion, you must alight; no horse can ascend this mount," said Jean of Lorraine.

"Deem you so? Let the trumpets sound, and ye shall discern to the contrary," replied Jeanne d'Arc, with a smile; and while a pursuivant, who chanced to be present, blew the friendly flourishes that summoned enemies to conference, she ascended the rampart on her steed, as if its hoofs were claws, and could crawl up pendently. So it struck the sentinels on the Tournelles, at all events, who instantly advised their captains of the circumstance with some such explanation.

The English generals were at this moment engaged in stormy deliberation in the chamber of the great tower, where Salisbury had received the stroke of death. Talbot had ordered that his blood should not be washed from the spot where he fell until it had been amply avenged by the destruction of Orleans. A large black splash, surrounded by wandering streams and scattered drops, marked the place of the chieftain's fall, and was very visible in the full light of the window whence he was looking when he received the greeting of Maître Jean.

The wrathful passions roused in Talbot's breast by the events of the day were fed and rekindled by the sight of this dismal memento, but still more by the strain of apology adopted by Fastolfe for his conduct. The Dragon Knight fiercely retaliated on Talbot, who accused him, by his inaction, in suffering the relief to pass his fort into Orleans unmolested, of causing the universal panic and discouragement visible among the troops, including his own. Fastolfe declared that the enemy so far outnumbered any force he could oppose to them, that it would have been madness in him to attack the convoy, and rated Talbot and the other commanders for not appearing in the field to aid him, and so being themselves causes of the failure. Stung perhaps with some secret consciousness, he however declared that henceforth he would depend solely on himself, and contend with the enemy as if there were no other English before Orleans but his own forces.

The earl of Suffolk in vain endeavoured to bring the discussion to the proper subject before the council—the expected arrival of a strong French reinforcement from Blois—and whether it would be best or not to go out and attack it on the way. Fastolfe was eagerly of this opinion, and offered to lead the assailants. But the other commanders remembered, with jealousy, the glories he had achieved at Rouvrai on a similar service; and, moreover, it was quite certain, as Talbot alleged, that if they abandoned their blockade, but for a moment, the people of Orleans would sally forth and destroy the

work of the nine months they had lain before it. The goodwill and daring displayed in the morning visitation to these labours sufficiently attested the likelihood of so untoward a result. The chiefs were in the midst of the wrangle produced by these opposing sentiments, when the announcement was made that the sorceress of Orleans demanded a parley with them.

The curiosity inspired by so extraordinary a being influenced the majority of the council in assenting to this demand. Talbot desired to express the scorn and indignation in his knightly breast, at such a degradation of chivalry as he imagined this vassal and peasant and woman's assuming its insignia to be. Suffolk furnished a general apology by exclaiming, "Comes she to treat of surrender?" and Fastolfe followed, reluctantly, as if dragged by some irresistible fascination.

The English generals descended to the gate of the fortress, which opened on what remained of the shattered arches of the bridge on their side; and the undaunted girl of Domremy, for the first time, beheld in a group those famous warriors whose names were the terror of France. Clad in their massive armour, and nearly all, from their great stature, obliged to bend as they came from the high wicket, the English leaders gazed upward in astonishment at the warlike woman and her motionless charger, which stood on what seemed the sharp edge of the bastion, with no footing for its hinder limbs but air!

"Suffolk, Talbot, Scales, Gladesdale, De la Pole, Moleyns, and Poynings; do ye hear me, for to ye I speak?" said Jeanne, observing that no more followed out on the platform.

"You have omitted one in the conjuration, witch!" shouted Talbot. "Here is your old friend, my lord Sir John Fastolfe, among us. But you dispense with addition."

"Thou art Talbot, doubtless, by thy love of it, but thou shalt win no more earldoms in France!" returned the prophetess, hastily. "Lo ye now, English lords, listen to me, while with bitter tears, but not of any dread—I entreat ye to spare the human blood which must else be vainly showered on these fields of Orleans; and in the name of the sweet and merciful Jesus, abandon your cruel siege, and return to your own castles and cities in peace—the past being all forgiven and forgotten for aye! And we will send you our refreshing wines, and ye shall send us the wools ye weave so artfully. Why should we battle?"

"Hear her! Doth she deem she is speaking to a squad of Flemish woolstaplers?" exclaimed Gladesdale.

"What says she of a shower of blood upon us?" said Fastolfe, in a low intensely-agitated voice. "That were too dread a prodigy to be endured by mortal men!"

"Hillo! hark you, harlot and ribald cow-wench of France!" cried Talbot, at the pitch of his mighty voice. "Return thou, and tend hogs in Lorraine, or by my knighthood and nobility, if ever I lay hands on thee, thy feigned wearing of a woman's face shall not save thee from pitch and faggot!"

An expression of wrathful sorrow gathered on the maiden's brow.

"Your ruin then be on your own heads! she replied.—"Witch am I none, but a woman inspired and comforted by holy angels; yea, and those clouds of heaven, where they are whitest round the sun, are not purer than I am in heart and deed. Talbot, thou liest! harlot am I none.—But it is well minded. Restore me mine herald; why hast thou detained him, against all usage of courtesy, a prisoner?"

"Because no courtesy is due to a peasant and a vile leman, such as thou art!" cried Sir Thomas Gladesdale.

"I expected none from a churl, such as thou art," retaliated Jeanne. "But what says Talbot? shall I have mine herald again?"

"Yea; but you must come and seek him: he is in the abbey of St. Loup," replied Talbot, with a bitter laugh. "Sir John Fastolfe hath him in safe keeping in his cupboards beneath the church."

"Alas, poor youth, in the vaults of the dead!" said Jeanne. "Arm, Fastolfe, and I will arm. Meet me where thou wilt before the town, and I will meet thee. If thou canst take me, burn me: but harm not mine herald that did my will in the teeth of fear: and if, as I think to do, I give ye a great overthrow, I will show ye mercy, and send ye home to your own land: or is it too unpleasant a place to live in, that ye are never happy in it?"

"We lack French grapes, trull! but our women are soft of speech and bosom, and dream not of shamelessly flaunting it in the garbs of men and soldiers!" shouted Sir Thomas Gladesdale.

"In God's name! there are enow of women on the earth without me to do the work of women," replied Jeanne, calmly. "But again, Fastolfe, wilt thou restore me mine herald?"

"Come and seek him, woful sorceress, in St. Loup," returned the knight, who saw that Talbot remarked his manifest agitation, striving to cover it with a tone of defiance. "For sorceress thou art, or darest thou avouch to these eyes thou art not? Wretched lost one! leave thy damnable counsels ere it is too late, for if thou perishest now, thou perishest eternally! Believe not the lies of the fiend, and come to me indeed in St. Loup, to be assoiled and pardoned from thy monstrous offence."

"Cruel ravager; ah, was it not thou that with thy bishop worked such harms in my village?" returned Jeanne d'Arc. "Doubt not that I will visit thee, and in such sort that thou shalt know 'tis I! Yea, I accept the invitation thou hast given me, and will visit thee like the fiery whirlwind of the Holy Land! But for mine herald, though I love not blood, whatever ye do to him,—I swear by Him who made death as well as life!—I will do to a hundred of the best English that fall into my hands."

"I give thee fair leave if I be one of them, dame," returned Talbot.

"He is a larger fellow than thou art, knight, therefore more work for agony," said Jeanne, with some scorn. "But ye have heard."

"Yea, yea, I am not so big of bone and muscle as I doubt not thou choosest thy paramours, but—oh, Christ!" exclaimed Talbot, half inarticulate with rage, and as if himself struck breathless with the excess of vengeance he meditated.

"Visit me first, bonny Joan, in the bastille of the Tournelles;" cried Sir Thomas Gladesdale. "I promise thee a reception to thy mind whether thou comest in fire or water, and indeed they say thou didst make Loire overrun his banks by holding up a straw, yesterday. Come thither, my May quean, and let us see if we have not wherewithal to content you."

"Thy turn shall come, English ribald," replied Jeanne, with a burning blush of wrath. "Farewell now, for your discourse is not for a woman's ears that hath not bid adieu to shame to live in your company. Farewell! But, Gladesdale, remember what now I tell you,—many of thy company shall fly from Orleans, but thou shalt not; in very truth, thy carcase shall feed the fishes of the Loire, or the vultures that hover over us as I speak!"

The English knights burst into a loud laugh, derisively waving their hands to the Maid, as she touched her charger's flanks, and seemed to precipitate herself into some gulf below. But she reached the bridge with a perilous leap, and the people, watching her with anxious affection, perceived that her face was bathed in tears. Murmurs of wrathful inquiry and indignation passed over the whole multitude.

"Ah, my brothers, the English will not peace, and they shall have war," she exclaimed. "But why do ye all look so sorrowfully on me? What! do I weep? And the English doubt that I am a woman! Tush!—but I will not weep again for one while, unless too many wives and mothers are made desolate in rooting out these brambles from around Orleans."

CHAPTER XV.

ORLEANS.

> "I find the people strangely fantasied;
> Possessed with rumours, full of idle dreams;
> Not knowing what they fear, but full of fear."—*King John.*

After this singular parley, Fastolfe no longer renewed his proposal to advance from Orleans and intercept the return of Dunois. The species of challenge which had passed between himself and the Maid laid him open to the ridicule of Lord Talbot if he had shown any further wish to leave St. Loup and shun her presence. Accordingly, it was determined to await within the lines of the blockade whatever the French might do.

This resolution, so unlike the usually bold and assured demeanour of their commanders, increased the silent action of the fears already prevalent among the English soldiery. In vain did Talbot punish with the cruellest military severity the conduct of those of his own division who had retired without his permission. The panic among them was continually fed by strange rumours, and the certainty that the sorceress dwelt at no great distance within the gate watched by

the fortification of St. Laurent. For the first time, during all the sanguinary campaigns that had so nearly completed the conquest of France, the English chivalry and soldiery heard with satisfaction that they were not expected to meet their enemies in the open field. For the first time they watched a sally from Orleans without the hope or desire of assailing it, when on the third morning after her arrival the Maid came forth with the chief part of the host in Orleans, and drew up in hostile array about a league from its walls, awaiting the arrival of her reinforcement from Blois.

These forces came almost punctually to the moment when it seemed she expected them, escorting so great a convoy of provisions of every sort, that Orleans needed no longer apprehend the horrors of the famine so lately relieved. The triumphant arrival of the former stores had awakened a universal hopefulness and enthusiasm in the towns of the Loire which had grudgingly denied their ability, but now profusely emptied their secret granaries and storehouses to victual the heroic city. The escort was marvellously swollen in number, and animated by an enthusiastic confidence and belief in the inspired leader that awaited them, approaching to a species of madness or intoxication. The archers on the bastille of St. Laurent shuddered to hear the terrific shout of joy with which these enemies greeted the appearance of the woman-warrior, whose magic arts were to rend them from its sheltering defences. The presence of Talbot, indeed, compelled them to some show of alacrity and resistance; and the united hosts of Jeanne d'Arc and Dunois were assailed by frequent discharges of culverins and arrows as they re-entered Orleans in triumphant procession. But the engineers and archers, working in confusion, and blinded by their own terrors, did so little damage to their enemies, that a belief arose among them which in future made even skill and courage hopeless. It was thought that the sorceress possessed a control over the air, so that it led astray the best-directed aim.

Immediately on the arrival of Dunois and his reinforcement in Orleans, a consultation of the principal captains and citizens was called in the town-house. Jeanne d'Arc was of course led thither among the former, for with all the rising apprehensions of several that they had changed Alençon for a more resolute controller, it was felt that the soldiers and populace attached interest and importance only to matters in which she had a part.

The Maid bore her honours with a species of fiery humility; for although she listened to the deliberation that ensued like a curbed war-horse that hears the trumpet sound a charge, she seemed to look to each speaker in turn with a patience that wore out that of people in general. At the close of each harangue every eye required her decision, but she uttered not a word. Bright flushes passed over her face, and her glance occasionally quickened with some wild fire of the thoughts within; but the oracle continued silent, until all who showed any desire to speak had delivered their sentiments. The chiefs of the host had by that time nearly unanimously expressed coincidence in the opinion delivered by the Marshal de Raix, that all had been done

for Orleans which was possible, and that it would be proper to return with the chief part of the relieving force to Blois and Chinon. It was thought that the English, perceiving the failure of their project of famishing the city, would finally weary of the siege and abandon it.

"Thus deem we all, Jeanne," said the gallant bastard; "and with many thanks to thee for thy good aid and cheer, I will myself escort thee back in triumph to the king!"

"What aid? what triumph?" exclaimed Jeanne, for the first time breaking her silence. "Your counsels are good, messieurs, but the counsels of Heaven are better! Did I come to Orleans merely to give its famished citizens a hearty meal? I came to raise the siege, to drive the English wolves from their prey! And what has been done? The market-stalls are filled—that is all—and nothing! Hear me, citizens and soldiers of Orleans! ye have been long enough besieged. It is time that ye should besiege in turn! Hath no eye then but mine discerned how these English are gathered as it were in separate hosts? Doth no soldier accustomed to the wars understand how if an attack at any point be of superior might, it must needs prevail? Let us then rush in our strength on these bastilles, and storm them as the waters storm rocks, for they cannot roll together to resist us in a solid mass! The Loire itself flows between their camps, not easily to be crossed with such obstructions as we can throw in their way."

The loud acclamations which burst on all sides showed that this bold counsel, inspired by genius and courage, was congenial to the excited state of the popular feeling. The valiant heart of Dunois was stirred in his bosom, and clutching the Maid's hand in his gauntlet, he gave it a wring which it required some firmness to endure unblenchingly. "Ah, noble Jeanne! St. Charlemagne himself, that was a good knight in his day, must be the saint that is appointed to advise with thee," he exclaimed. "We will do as thou hast said, and commence assailing all the little fortresses, twenty in number, that harry us so on the north, and prevent us from chatting with our friends in Beausse."

"Not so, good bastard; know ye not that if ye break the stancheons, all the links of the chain fall of themselves?" replied the warlike maiden; "whereas a broken link takes but little trouble to make whole again. Therefore, if my counsel be good, we will cross the river, and, beginning with St. Loup, destroy all the bastilles of the English on the south, while their main power on the north looks helplessly on!"

"Now, indeed, you speak, Jeanne, like a woman and a shepherdess, altogether unskilled in arms," said the envious De Raix; "deem you, messieurs, that a captain so famous in warfare as Talbot will fold his arms, and whistle while we crush his fellows at our pleasure? He will collect his troops from the whole line, and cross the Loire to their deliverance."

"And then is the siege raised!" returned Jeanne. "For what have the citizens and soldiery we shall leave in Orleans to do, but instantly to march forth, and with fire and sword erase the bastilles

and forts thus left, as boys do the vultures' nests in rocks when they are swooping abroad on their prey?"

"But, meanwhile, Talbot and his vultures—or soldiers, as reasonable captains hold and call them—will crush our assailing forces on the south of the river," said the marshal, sneeringly. "What flourishing words have you, Jeanne, to meet this certainty?"

"Not words, but deeds! Our swords shall be sharpened as scythes for the harvest, be the crop however rank and growing," replied the Maid. "But, marshal, knowest *thou* not, whose hairs are grizzled in the helmet, that 'tis not easy to cross a broad river with a resolved foe in front? He who holds St. Loup has his hand on the neck of the bottle that holds Talbot and his wasps!"

"Marry, then, how wilt *thou* cross the Loire, since St. Loup is in the hands of the conquering Fastolfe?" retorted de Raix.

"How crossed I hither from St. Loup?" said Jeanne, with a sublime and beaming glance around the assembly, that expressed and communicated the supernatural confidence in her heart. "Methinks I should know the way thither back again. What sayest thou, Dunois? Wilt thou with me?"

"Nay, my lord, the bastard can have no very good will to this service; he has seen Sir John Fastolfe in arms ere now," said De Raix, with a malicious allusion to the great defeat sustained by Dunois and the other French captains in the Battle of the Herrings.

"Jeanne, I will follow thee to hell itself! Art thou indeed the sorceress the English would have men think thee?" said Dunois, on whom this stroke of wit produced a very different effect from that intended.

"So will not I, nor any that obey me," returned De Raix. "How shall I answer to the king and my Lord de la Trimouille, if I stake the last relief that Orleans can expect, the last army that France can set a-foot, in a bat-blind attack on the impregnable bastilles of the English on the farther shore?—Not a lance of mine shall stir with her!"

"Be it so; all who choose may remain in Orleans; all who choose to go with me must be armed and in readiness at noonday," replied the unshaken Maid; and, rising, the council seemed to dissolve itself at her gesture.

The news of the intended attack flew through the city as if the winds had a commission to deliver it; and in spite of the angry efforts of De Raix to dissuade from the enterprise, the volunteers who assembled to execute it were in such multitudes, that Jeanne herself was surprised, and perceived that it would be dangerous to draw so many defenders from the city at once; and, moreover, the boats would not suffice to convey a twentieth part of the number with the necessary rapidity. Her natural sagacity and observation measured the time it would take Talbot to cross against her assailing party, with the precision of a veteran general, and the time required for the success of her own meditated assault. That speed was the very soul of her project, resulted from this calculation; and, therefore, without troubling herself at the Marshal

De Raix's arrogance of triumph, she ordered that no soldier or citizen should leave Orleans in her company but such as were under the immediate command of Dunois and the other captains of the city. To console the rest, she smilingly assured them they could guard her better by watching that Talbot and the English did not cross the river, than by going with her side by side.

The seasoned and resolute bands of Dunois, La Hire, and Poton de Saintrailles, to the number of fifteen hundred combatants, were those that crossed the Loire on this memorable day for France. With happy daring, adopting the suggestion of Jean the cannoneer, Jeanne caused so great a body of troops to be floated at once, on a raft, to the place of landing, directly before St. Loup, that its defenders did not think proper to attempt assailing them as they disembarked. Probably Fastolfe, who commanded there, imagined they were a part of the reinforcement effecting a retreat on Blois, and too numerous to be openly coped with. The audacity of besieging a besieging host in its strongest position, had not yet entered into the contemplation of any of the English captains, and it was not until the bastille of St. Loup was assailed on every side, that its experienced commander seemed to comprehend the amazing project of his enemies.

The fortifications of St. Loup were formed from the remains of a stately abbey, burned hollow, save where the massive masonry resisted even the destructive energy of fire. The cloisters and central tower of the belfry furnished the most advantageous covering and elevations whence missiles and artillery might be discharged. The neighbouring orchards and churchyard of the edifice were on high ground, and had been fenced by the Flemings, who first occupied the fortification, with a high rampart of earth and a deep ditch. St. Loup was consequently in very defensible order, if the defenders had been in as good spirits as the assailants. But Fastolfe himself showed every symptom of irresolution and gloom, and gave no orders, merely pacing the ramparts in silence, and occasionally gazing with a species of bewilderment at his enemies, like one who hopes that an approaching storm may pass without bursting,—until he perceived the preparations making for an assault.

Astonishment was rapidly succeeded by a sentiment which roused all the knightly and warrior impulses in the heart of Fastolfe. To be thus braved and bearded by a woman-leader, in sight of the whole host of England, and as it seemed in answer to his own challenge!—Fastolfe forgot for awhile the supernatural terrors that surrounded this image of shame and insult! Or it might have been that species of valiant desperation which defies and even seeks the worst, but he resumed the port and courage of the victor of Rouvrai, as it seemed, with the start of a sleeper from some strange dream. In a moment the whole aspect of St. Loup changed. The soldiery took courage from the mere looks of their commander, so deep and slavish was the dependence created by feudal habits of the common people on their lords. The whole fortification became animate with defenders, and the assailants were welcomed with such a shower of arrows from

every point, that, in the words of Jeanne d'Arc, it seemed as if a snowstorm, mingled with hail, rattled on their armour.

At the earnest request of Dunois she consented to let La Hire lead the assault, and remained with the former beneath some chestnuts skirting a vineyard, beside which her enthusiastic soldiers rushed, yelling with joy and the certainty of victory. She waved her consecrated standard over their ranks as they passed, and on they poured like a torrent overflowing its own bounds and cresting some opposite summit with the impetus of the shock. None observed that many fell—not even the Maid herself, whose distended eyes watched their advance, as a lioness might the first spring of its cubs on a prey. It was in fact a settled article of popular belief that no combatant under her guidance could perish, which the sight of many a heap of the slain did not for a long period dispel.

Dunois himself was struck with a vague sentiment of awe and wonder as he watched the effect which the first experience of the actual horrors of warfare produced on the youthful woman beside him. No shadow of fear blanched the hues of her deep complexion; her eyes were filled with a fierce joy and watchfulness, while her clenched lips and knit hands seemed to share in the distant conflict; for conflict it became in a very brief period. The ditches and high rampart appeared to be surmounted by magic aid, and a hand-to-hand combat raged all round the summit of the bastille.

"How goes the fight, bastard? thou who tellest me that a good leader should watch the changes of the battle, and not share in it," said Jeanne. "Canst thou discern from this distance how it fares with France?"

"See you not La Hire is on the crown of the bastion? Look how his sword flashes as he whirls it in the sun! Look at the lilies on the standard he bears!" returned Dunois.

"He is there!—but look again! what mighty knight rushes against him? It is Fastolfe, by the hideous dragon on his shield and breast! They hurtle together like two wild boars in the forest, and—O, La Hire! God grant thou art well confessed! look how he rolls down the rampart beneath that stroke of fire!" exclaimed Jeanne.

"La Hire is a good tumbler, he will be never the worse; yet, Jesu and our Lady! he lies quite still and bleeding in the ditch!" returned Dunois, striving in vain to conceal his agitation. "I should be there but for thee, Jeanne; for if thou art slain, I see clearly the soldiers will lose all heart again! Ah, base swineherds, they have already! See you how they come flying, leaping, rolling, tearing, yelling down!"

It was even so. The English soldiery, roused to fury by the exhortations and courage of their leader, in one tremendous rush overthrew the assailants on every side, and cleared their ramparts. Some, indeed, fell over with the violence of their own shock, and rolled headlong with their enemies into the ditches. The French had, meanwhile, lost the impetus of the attack, and were discouraged by the fall of La Hire. The more habitual sentiments inspired by

innumerable defeats gained the mastery over those excited in the popular mind by the apparition of Jeanne d'Arc, and the general mass of the assailants fairly turned their backs and fled in helter-skelter confusion from the heights they had so valiantly scaled.

"Said I not, good bastard, there are times when a captain should not only order the charge but lead it?" exclaimed Jeanne, at this juncture. And suddenly setting spurs to her steed, and raising her standard aloft, she galloped to the scene of action, shouting all the way—"False French, false French! return, or ye are but lost—ye, and your children's children for ever!" Dunois, who couched his lance and put his war-horse to its speed beside her, could scarcely keep abreast.

The sight of their warlike prophetess produced an almost equal, though opposite, effect on the combatants. The English paused in dismay, and the fugitive French resumed more than their former audacity.

"They will renew the assault, and in myriads! They are around us in myriads!" exclaimed Fastolfe to Wulfstan of Warbois, who stood beside him. "Behold, how the witch rides all round our ditches, and rallies them everywhere, and seems to people the air with helmets at the waft of her accursed standard! Unless aid come, we may not farther brook their assault, for we are too few, and not an arm stirs in our behalf. Are they all blinded in the Tournelles; and is Talbot deaf?"

"I will let him hear, my lord, if it pleases you, for I will make my way over the Loire to crave help from him;" replied the verdurer.

"It were too dangerous," said Fastolfe. "We are too thickly surrounded. And rather will I perish a thousand times, then ask aid of gibing Talbot."

"I fear nothing so much as this woman's approach—not the fiend himself!" replied Wulfstan, whose cheeks were very unusually pale. "Forasmuch, my lord, as you know well, I have received no absolution for my sin of loving her in honesty, I am her thrall and slave, and have reason to dread her more then any other man."

"Sayst thou so?" said Fastolfe, with a gloomy laugh. "Why, then, stay not among us, to infect us with thy fears, but hasten to the Tournelles, and bid the earl of Suffolk and Thomas Gladesdale, if they love me and England, to come to the rescue."

A pause had taken place in the assault, while Dunois and the Maid rode round the lines, collecting and reanimating their soldiery to renew it in a more simultaneous and orderly manner. La Hire was found to be but stunned and bruised by the stroke of Fastolfe and his fall, his red scarf in the distance looking like blood as it weltered under him on the ground. Foaming and chafing with rage at his ill-success, he had resumed his place among the assailants. These were much increased in number, for the impatience of the younger citizens of Orleans could no longer be restrained, and they arrived in masses. The whole shore and plain to the castle of the Tournelles was crowded with these detachments, and rallying French soldiery. It was, therefore, no easy task which the verdurer

accepted, in offering to carry his lord's entreaties for aid to that fortress—the nearest English strength. But he undertook it with alacrity, since it was to take him from the dreaded presence of the French sorceress.

Wulfstan was well acquainted with the country around Orleans, and he knew that he must leave the bastille in a direction contrary to the one he intended to pursue, to give any hopes of success. A deep trench sloped to the Loire from the bastille of St. Loup, to secure the safe transit of provisions, and he determined to go down that until he reached the water, and so to take a circuit round the assailants to the Tournelles. He proceeded, by Fastolfe's command, to mount one of the swiftest horses belonging to his master. These were stabled in what had formerly been a square court, environed with cloisters, and which now contained the principal part of the baggage, fodder, and provisions of the garrison. The horses of Fastolfe's knights and esquires, as well as his own, were tied by halters around a great stone shrine in the middle of the court, representing some grotesque carving of a saint. The ground was strewed with straw and hay, and several waggon loads of dry broom, to make beds for the soldiers, were piled together so as to confine the chargers to a certain limit. Squires and grooms had all been summoned to the defence, and only one human thing was visible, at least until the eye ranged upward among the shattered arches of the cloisters. There the gleam of armour and cross-bows at intervals showed how discordantly these platforms, intended for the peaceful walks of musing monks and devotees, were occupied.

This one human existence was that of the herald, Orleans, destined to be Rheims, the bold and fanatic bearer of Jeanne d'Arc's summons to the English commanders. He was chained to the shrine, at which Talbot had solemnly vowed he should be burned as an agent in witchcraft as soon as the destruction of Orleans secured the English prisoners against the threatened reprisals of Jeanne d'Arc. But so little did the herald seem to dread this fate, that he had dragged himself on the ground, as near as his chain would possibly allow, to a fire left in embers by some of the grooms who were engaged at the instant of the alarm in cooking their dinners. Still, though stretched to the utmost length of his body and arms, the herald had not managed to approach the flames within some distance when Wulfstan entered the inclosure.

"What do you there, evil messenger?" said the verdurer, hurriedly selecting the steed he meant to bestride.

"Woe is me! I shudder in an ague that will destroy me, Englishman, unless I can approach the warmth," returned Orleans, trembling with no counterfeit agitation. In mercy's name, either dispatch me, or lengthen my chain that I may reach the fire, or it will never chance that the Lord Talbot will do on me the justice he threatens."

"Then thou ownest thyself to be a witch's damned herald?" said Wulfstan; and the herald nodded with eager acquiescence. "Heaven forbid, so, that thou shouldst perish in thy guilt! I will lengthen the chain by what thou lackest to the fire."

The verdurer removed a lance from a link in the herald's chain

which acted as a cross bar, through a hole perforated in the shrine, and assigned him his range. This he lengthened so as to allow him to reach to the fire, and securing it again in the rivet, returned to saddle a horse. The herald meanwhile, though still shuddering and groaning, assiduously fanned and fed the embers with the pieces of wood and straw within his reach.

Wulfstan completed his arrangements and departed, traversing the trench without apparently exciting notice. But as he advanced he distinctly heard the uproar of a renewed assault, which continued every moment thickening. The verdurer's heart reproached him with the thought that he was deserting his lord and his comrade in a great danger, and he repeatedly hesitated, and was about to turn. Yet, whenever the terrific idea of the sorceress of Domremy returned upon him, he pricked his steed anew, until he reached the opening of the trench on the Loire. But here, to his great vexation, he found that he had forgotten to bring the keys of the sluicegate, which closed it at high water; and looking dismally about to consider what was best to be done, the verdurer's ears were suddenly nigh burst with a terrific sound that filled them. The whole firmament appeared to be in flames, for an instant, and then rolled full of vast clouds of black and crimson smoke! Wulfstan turned, and a dreadful spectacle indeed saluted his gaze. All that remained of the Abbey of St. Loup was either tossed into the air by some tremendous explosion, or whelmed in masses of flames. Its unfortunate defenders in the cloisters were precipitating themselves in every direction from the burning pile, uttering dreadful cries of despair. Fastolfe's soldiery, hitherto engaged in furious conflict with their assailants, were glaring nervelessly back at the hideous uproar and ruin effected in their chief strength. The assailants themselves had paused, as if paralyzed, in various attitudes of raging struggle and onset. And amidst this fierce illumination the genius of destruction herself seemed to appear and direct all in the person of Jeanne d'Arc, whose steed had borne her, no one knew how, scarcely even herself, to the summit of the highest bastion. The glare and flash of her brilliant armour and weapons in the bright, ruddy blaze, enabled the worthy verdurer ever after to aver and believe that in the confusion of battles the sorceress became of red hot steel, in order to guide her followers! He was undoubtedly right in asserting that before the English had the least time to understand and remedy the damage received, one waft of her magic standard hurled the assailants once more in overwhelming masses on their foes.

The verdurer paused not to reason on the subject, nor did it once occur to him that the fanatic and desperate herald might have used the liberty he had afforded him to fire the interior of the abbey, and the military stores brought by Fastolfe to the siege. He concluded at once that the French witch had used the agency of fiends to destroy the valiant defenders of St. Loup, and that all resistance was in vain. Finding it impossible to open the sluicegates with the most violent strokes of the axe, the affrighted verdurer perceived that it would be necessary for him to climb over them, and leave his horse in the trench. He accomplished this manœuvre so far as to reach the top of the gates,

when he saw that the river was nearly on a level with them. Looking round to ascertain what other chance of escape might remain, he perceived that the fields and vineyards around were covered with French, all hurrying, with one common feeling of hatred and vengeance, to complete the destruction of their vanquished foes at St. Loup. Wulfstan could not doubt that all hope of maintaining the position was lost. The fortification was one mass of flames; and at the moment he reached his point of observation the great gate of the bastille opened, and Fastolfe, attended by a small body of knights and men-at-arms, burst forth.

Wulfstan, in his own panic, thought for an instant that his lord meant to surrender himself to mercy. He saw that a lofty chevalier, well known to the English soldiery as the Bastard of Orleans, rode from the French ranks and courteously summoned him, as was evident from his spear being raised upward. Fastolfe's only reply was, "St. George, and charge!" and with his companions he swept onward, all levelling their lances. It was now plain that they had determined to force their way through their enemies to some of the English forts in the neighbourhood. Masses of the French chivalry instantly dashed forward to oppose the attempt. Lances were shivered and saddles emptied on all sides, and masterless steeds fled madly over the plain.

It was doubtless Fastolfe's purpose to cut a passage to the Tournelles, whither the majority of the fugitives had already taken their flight. But the dreadful and ever-increasing resistance he met with soon rendered this hope in vain. The French leaders had skilfully thrown their masses between the destroyed and the friendly fortifications of their enemies. The Dragon Knight's few followers were speedily surrounded; his own lance shivered against the breast of Dunois; but still he fought as if unconscious of any, or defying all, odds. In the days of his brightest fame, the renowned English leader never had displayed more nobly the personal qualities expected by that age in one, as on this, the first of his decline. The assailants themselves at times relaxed their exertions, half in dread and half in admiration, and the generous Dunois, while bandying blows with his former conqueror, frequently implored him to yield to numbers, and spare his own life. But Fastolfe was deaf to entreaties; it seemed as if he were drunk or maddened by some mighty passion raging within. When the last of his little band was struck down by his side, it appeared only to rouse him to still more desperate energy. It is true that he no longer attempted to make way towards the Tournelles, but raising himself in his stirrups, and flourishing a sword covered with gore to the hilt, he raised his cry of "St. George, and charge!" and burst through every resistance at a wild gallop towards the Loire. In dashed the good steed, and in dashed a pellmell mob of horsemen and knights in pursuit. But the honest verdurer could no longer endure the spectacle of his lord's peril, and he echoed his shout so furiously, that the French imagined themselves assailed from behind, and turned to withstand their unknown foes. This gave Sir John Fastolfe the power he might else have wanted of forcing his steed to attempt

breasting the strong current of the Loire, which it at first refused—and Wulfstan had the consolation to perceive that his lord was out of danger, if he escaped drowning, just before he himself fell backwards into the trench, stunned, and almost brained, by a prodigious blow from the mace of La Hire.

CHAPTER XVI.

TOURNELLES.

"Assigned am I to be the English scourge.
This night the siege assuredly I'll raise!"—*Henry VI.*

The reader will scarcely have failed to remark with surprise the inaction of all the other English commanders during the destruction of Fastolfe at St. Loup. But it was not unaccountable. The jealousies and rivalry subsisting between Fastolfe and Talbot rendered the latter unwilling to interfere, even from a chivalric and honourable motive, where the former might expect to add to his glories by being the first to repulse the attack of the portentous leader of France. Something of a desire to humble his opponent by waiting until he sent to entreat for aid, or till it became manifest he could no longer do without it, must be added. On the other hand, Fastolfe, aware of his rival's purposes, was resolved rather to perish than to yield him the satisfaction he desired.

Moreover, when Talbot was alarmed by the conflagration visible over the Loire, into a conviction of the great peril into which the Dragon Knight had fallen, it was in vain to attempt his rescue. The Marshal de Raix, perceiving also the evidence of Jeanne's triumph, determined to share it, and sallied forth in great strength to assail St. Laurent. It required all the energies of Talbot and of his troops to repel this attack and guard the extensive line of his communications round the city. A madly enthusiastic mob of women, children, and rabble, assailed them on every side from the walls, and even made several furious sorties with torches and other firing materials, striving to set the huts and tents of the besiegers along the trenches in a blaze. It was only the triumphant return of Jeanne d'Arc and her blackened bands from the destruction of St. Loup that caused a suspension of these hostilities.

Meanwhile, the much nearer fortress of the Tournelles, and the great bastille of the Augustins, made no effort to relieve their distressed allies at St. Loup. The sally was so sudden and unexpected, that both these fortifications were doubtful against which in particular it was directed, until the assault of St. Loup took place, and it was scarcely doubted that Fastolfe would repulse it, as in fact he did, until the bursting forth of the conflagration and the arrival of Jeanne d'Arc destroyed all courage among his soldiers. This event carried the panic much farther: at all events, the earl of Suffolk refused to allow Sir Thomas Gladesdale to lead his forces to the rescue, from

the Tournelles, apparently dismayed by the prodigious number of the assailants who now covered the intervening country. The remoter fort of the Augustins, as was but polite, imitated the example of its superior.

The destruction of St. Loup laid bare one important cover to the siege; but even after the achievement of so signal a beginning, none of the English commanders had any notion of the supreme audacity of the farther projects formed by the young peasant girl of Domremy. Suffolk had crossed the Loire on the following day, and was in conference with Talbot and the other chiefs of the army on what was to be done to repair the disaster, when news arrived that the French were again betaking themselves in great masses to their boats, as if with the intention of resuming offensive operations on the southern shore.

Talbot's opinion in the council was now absolutely paramount. Sir John Fastolfe disdained to take refuge in his rival's fortress of St. Laurent, and it was now known had retired in wrath to one of the neighbouring English garrisons, protesting, in the wildest terms of indignation, against the desertion which he imputed to the rest of the captains: and Talbot's great military science and experience were the very lights that in this instance misled his judgment. He penetrated the hope of the French generals, that he would be induced by a renewal of the attack on the opposite shore, so successful thus far, to raise the blockade, and attempt a dangerous passage of the river, with his main force, to the rescue. This might easily be resisted by enemies in strong possession of the shore, or at all events protracted long enough to allow the citizens of Orleans time to destroy his works, and prevent his return. The military genius of a shepherd girl, which had reduced him to such an alternative, could not be admitted by the haughty spirit of the English leader. He imputed Fastolfe's defeat at St. Loup to the surprise effected, and his superstitious discouragement. Neither of these adverse circumstances were to be anticipated with Sir Thomas Gladesdale, who commanded in the Tournelles, nor the cheerful and audacious Lord Scales, who was captain of the Augustins. Both these fastnesses, but especially the Tournelles, were of prodigious strength, well manned, and fortified with all the resources of the military science of the age; and reviewing these circumstances, Talbot insisted that the real attack was meditated on the besieging lines round the city, and that the French could not have the madness to imagine it possible to take two fortresses of such strength without a long siege. It was likely that they would abandon the attempt at once when they saw it produced no effect in moving the blockade; or if they persisted, and gathered their forces from the city to effect the purpose, an excellent opportunity would arise of carrying it by storm, in the absence of the mass of the defenders.

This reasoning was successful. Suffolk remained in St. Laurent in expectation of these contingencies, contenting himself with sending orders to the menaced captains to remain within their fortifications, and resist to the last extremity. These instructions had scarcely

been delivered before the huge rafts and flotilla that bore the French armament glided calmly and majestically down the Loire, and landed their living freight beneath the destroyed and blackened piles of St. Loup.

The sight of these sooty masses of ruin was accepted at once as a trophy of victory and the pledge of greater successes, by the enthusiastic multitude that accompanied the Maid. She landed amidst a deafening cheer audible to the farthest environ of Orleans, and accompanied by nearly all the chief captains in the city, all anxious to share in the glories confidently anticipated. Then calmly mounting her snowy charger, and raising her standard, Jeanne exclaimed—and there was an utter silence at the first motion of her lips—"Orleans, Orleans! never will I re-enter thee but by thy noble bridge, and through the Tournelles and bulwarks now held by our English foes!"

"Thou dost wrong, daughter, to say so without express assurance from the voice appointed by heaven for thy guidance," said Friar Richard, very pettishly and rebukingly. "More especially as thou seest two of the arches of the bridge are broken, and the English possess the Tournelles in such strength and audacity."

"Be not angry, good father, but there is a voice now in my heart speaks as mightily as ever that of St. Michael in mine ears," replied Jeanne, who entertained a profound respect for the cordelier since the events of Domremy, which was increased by the archbishop's appointment of him as her confessor. "Thus comforted, I rather rest assured that heaven would span the broken arches with a rainbow, and make it strong enough to bear the tramp of an armed host, than that my pledge shall fail. Yet you speak very wisely, and I know full well that blood of mine own shall be shed in this onset! But be none of ye affrighted when ye shall see it, for my work is only commenced, and death hath as yet no power given him to assail me."

"Let it be known, if Jeanne is hurt, that she prophesied it, and that no harm shall follow," said Friar Richard, tremulously. "But, messires, I trust you will preserve this precious vessel without a flaw, and not suffer her to tempt Providence by too rash exposure."

"And fear nothing from him below, for La Hire will ride so closely in her company that he shall not have leave to choose, but take his own, or his master's," said that galliard champion. "Good, my Lord Bastard, have thou the whole ordonnance to-day, for I will have neither eyes nor hand for any but the Maid and the English until we re-enter Orleans, even as she has said."

"And sworn, La Hire," returned Jeanne, smilingly. "And to begin, we must not have yonder nettlebush pricking us in the back while we assail the great bramble before us. Let us ride softly to St. Jean-le-Blanc, and take it from the English."

This was a small detached fort that formed the apex of a triangle with the great bastilles of the Tournelles and Augustins, at a considerable distance, but near enough to annoy or cut off the communications in the rear of an attacking force. Orders had been given, in case of molestation, that the garrison should evacuate St. Jean-le-Blanc, and retire to the Augustins. This circumstance, unhappily,

furnished the Lord Scales and the youthful chivalry who held the fortress of the Augustins with a pretence for disobeying the strict command they had received, by making a sally as if to cover the retreat of their countrymen. Burning to revenge their recent defeat from an enemy they despised, and to reap the rich harvest of glory offered by the contrast of success, the English knights poured forth in a splendid squadron, under the command of the Lord Scales, in the direction obviously taken by the first French that landed.

"Aha, Jeanne! what shall we do now? Dost thou see how far we have outstripped the rest?" said La Hire, with a wild gleeful laugh, but glancing doubtfully at the female warrior whose steed galloped abreast with his own, while the glittering masses of the English chivalry gleamed like the edge of a lengthening sword on the line of their advance.

"Onward boldly, we shall not long be alone!" returned Jeanne, flourishing her standard aloft. "Onward, and the froth on the waves resists a furious wind as they shall us!"

Almost as she spoke they reached the verge of a deep ditch surrounding the bulwarks of St. Jean-le-Blanc. The English soldiery were evacuating it by a narrow bridge of planks on the opposite side, and in unseemly haste, for this remote outpost shared the general alarm. Jeanne planted her standard with her usually joyous and triumphant Aha!—and they fled! Veterans who had fought with Henry V. at Agincourt fled before a woman's shout of defiance!

Nevertheless, so few French had been able to keep pace with her impetuous career, that La Hire found it too perilous to attempt taking possession of the fort. Or if he meditated such an exploit, his attention was claimed in another direction, by the rapid advance of the English squadrons. Perceiving the overwhelming mass converging on them, the horsemen accompanying Jeanne were affrighted in turn, and nearly all took to retracing their steps with the utmost rapidity towards the main body of their friends, who having now landed in considerable numbers, were forming under the orders o Dunois. Jeanne herself reluctantly yielded to La Hire's suggestion who candidly confessed that they were lost if they remained where they were, and tore up her standard to take it back with her. The English discerned this action, which they imputed to fear, and set up loud derisive shouts and hisses as they continued their furious advance. And doubtless it was an inspiration, at least of military genius, when galloping across the line of their approach, Jeanne suddenly turned her horse's head, and shouting, "A woman then shall vanquish ye!—France to the rescue!" she rode full face, with her standard broadly waving in a gush of wind that assailed it, against the English squadrons. La Hire turned, and Dunois with the whole line of his horsemen came thundering on with such speed, that they passed the rushing prophetess herself, and overthrew everything before them. And then it was for the first time under the skies of France that the English soldiery took to a shameful flight before their enemies! A panic seized the whole host, but an instant before whirling on to victory as if assured that nothing could resist them.

Knights, and men-at-arms, and yeoman-archers alike fled! Some to the fortifications around the Tournelles, but by far the greater number to those of the Augustins, which they had so lately left in orderly bands of war.

It may be imagined whether the victorious French relaxed in a pursuit which continued to be led with unflagging speed by their beloved captainess. La Hire and Dunois were on each side of Jeanne d'Arc when she entered the first into the bastille of the Augustins, by a gate which the English had no time to close. These two renowned champions made a perpetual net-work of blows around her with their swords, and kept danger aloof. Jeanne's preservation in the onset must else indeed have been miraculous, so environed with foes was she; and when she carried her standard high on her lance, as now, she had no weapon but a sword, which she rarely drew. The danger was only momentary; a fierce crowd pressed in, and carried the whole fortifications of the Augustins in an irresistible rush of victory. The slaughter was terrible; for being inclosed in the walls of the bastille, and scarcely defending themselves, while the furious French never thought of giving quarter, the English perished in masses. The horror of the scene was consummated by the orders of the French commanders, who had taken a lesson from the accidental destruction of St. Loup, and determined to level all the works of the besiegers by fire, so as to prevent all danger of their being re-occupied. And it was beneath the broad glare of the mighty conflagration kindled in the Augustins that Jeanne d'Arc led her half-frenzied legions to a new attack!

It was growing towards sunset when the complete demolition and firing of the bastille of the Augustins enabled Jeanne to lay formal siege to the great object of all these onslaughts, the key-stone of the whole English strength, the castle and fortifications of the Tournelles. The armed masses which continually arrived from Orleans and the precautions of the Marshal of St. Severe meanwhile kept this fortress in a rigid blockade, which even the daring Gladesdale did not attempt to break. From his lofty bulwarks he was compelled to witness the slaughter of his friends and the destruction of the main arm of his own position without an effort at prevention. And now he beheld the victorious enemy, flushed with triumph, roll round his own ramparts like the surging-back of a sea among breakers! The crimson of the setting sun was outglared by the blaze of a conflagration which furnished a fitting illumination to fields strewed with carcases of men and horses, each lying in his own dark pool, and gave a satanic splendour, in the imaginations of the surviving English soldiery, to the flag which Jeanne pitched unharmed, beneath a shower of arrows, on the verge of the mighty fosse that guarded their last stronghold on that side of the Loire.

Nearly all the French leaders, including the valiant Dunois and La Hire, considered enough had been done on that day, and wished to return to the city. They were alarmed at the great multitudes which had assembled to this strangely reversed siege, and at the consequent depletion of the city itself. But Jeanne d'Arc, with a truer

instinct, or with one which taught her that to fail in a tittle of her promises broke their magic influence of fulfilment, resolutely declared she would never re-enter Orleans but as she had said, by the bridge and gate of the Tournelles.

The captains of the French host comprehended very clearly by this time, that if the Maid remained before the Tournelles their soldiery would also, in spite of any commands to the contrary. The delirium of victory was in the hearts of all; and in spite of the darkness and their exhaustion, the people desired only permission to commence an attack on the mighty bastille defending the approach to the Tournelles, on the land side. But Jeanne was wise and provident before she commenced the enterprises she conducted with a wildness of enthusiasm verging on frenzy. She appreciated the difficulties of the one which now awaited her, and contented herself with ordering the soldiery to bivouac around the besieged fort while she sent messengers to Orleans to procure all the disposable provisions, troops and artillery that could be spared from the defence of the city.

Finding such was her resolve, the captains of the army no longer offered any opposition. Many indeed began to share the belief and implicit confidence of the people in her divine authority. Fires were lighted over the plain, and to the cheerless fancies of the gazers from the Tournelles, an innumerable host seemed to cover the scene. In truth, tidings of the victory achieved, and desire to share that in progress, brought all from Orleans who could by possibility leave it. The women and children even took advantage of their warring kinsfolks' demand for provisions and the necessity of attending on the wounded, to crowd over the Loire. Maître Jean, on the summons of his new captain, crossed with his heaviest guns to her bivouac, to the extreme dismay of the defenders in the Tournelles, who had never seen artillery moved with such lightness and deftness before. The artist of destruction felt that he was appreciated, and was inspired too!

The wavering lights of this vast bivouac peopled the air with phantoms, or else the melancholy cogitations of the English over those fields strewed with their slaughtered brethren suggested unreal horrors. It was confidently reported and credited in the Tournelles, that numerous fiends, with fiery eyes and dusky wings, sat munching the once valorous hearts of the slain, with their destroyers, round the French watchfires. A portentous spectacle was also observed from the bulwarks of the bastille. An altar of marble was brought into a field below, occupied by the principal captains of the army; and by the scarlet glow of a huge camp fire in the centre, it seemed to the English that they beheld performed the rites of some terrific superstition! Figures habited like priests, with a pallid monk among them, celebrated what was doubtless a mass to the powers of evil, for it was impossible to think that the sorceress would offer one to any other, and Jeanne d'Arc, surrounded by her companions in battle, knelt, devoutly praying, with her hands clasped on the hilt of her sword, and her eyes fixed upward, in a passion of thanksgiving, on the skies, glittering less radiantly with their stars. Snatches of

chaunts and hymns of triumph came fitfully to the listeners' ears, and were interpreted into invocations of sorcery.

It needed all the determined courage and defying mockery of Sir Thomas Gladesdale's character to sustain the resolution of his men on this disastrous night; but they were composed of the bravest and best disciplined of the English troops, were numerous and well appointed, and partook in general of the qualities of their reckless leader. Daylight dissipated most of the terrors of a supernatural kind; and Talbot sent them assurances in the night, that he intended to give them a diversion, by a general attack on Orleans from his own side of the Loire. But he had reckoned without his host. Still, when the French commenced their dreadful work early in the morning of the following day, they found the besieged in the Tournelles in full and tranquil readiness.

Jeanne only permitted the thongs of her armour to be loosened, and slept in complete harness until the break of light permitted her to resume operations. It was observed, however, that she was paler and more thoughtful than usual, when she rode forth to meet the other captains; and La Hire laughed aloud, when, gazing sorrowfully over the scene of the preceding day's triumph, he saw her eyes fill and overflow. "Alas! there are more tears of English wives and mothers on this turf than dew-drops on the blades of grass!" she exclaimed. "Were there no graves in their own land, that they must seek them here? God pardon us, that we deface his glorious image thus! and would to our Lady, that France might be redeemed by some other means than the bloodshed of our foes!"

"We must water our faded lilies with English blood much more profusely, ere they will bloom again," replied Dunois.

"There is blood, too, of mine on this field," said Jeanne, with a slight shudder. "But it matters nothing: the victory shall be ours. Where is John, the cannoneer?"

This worthy stepped forward with an eager and important step: and it was observed, that Jeanne consulted with him for some time, while the captains of the army rode round the bastille of the Tournelles, and planned the assault.

This bastille consisted of a fortification, thrown up to defend the land side of the bridge, which was occupied in full strength, at the distance of an arrow's flight, by the castle of the Tournelles. A very deep and broad ditch, and three ramparts of earth, rising one above the other, fenced with stakes and planted with cannon, guarded a walled inclosure beyond, wherein were the tents and baggage belonging to the chiefs of the English army. These personages, including the earl of Suffolk, were absent on the other side of the water, expecting the supposed meditated attack from Orleans, or to share in Talbot's real one on the city. But the massive figure of Sir Thomas Gladesdale appeared at every point inspiring courage into his soldiery with his rude jests and cheerful presence.

Mass was said in the French camp, and then the signal of the assault was given by the whole army of the assailants advancing with terrific shout and uproar, overthrowing each other in the eagerness of

the onset, and hurling the foremost over into the ditches, in their zeal to keep abreast with the Maid, who planted her standard the first on the verge of the fosse. The other principal captains and warriors did the like, till the ditches were skirted with a waving forest of standards, and then the multitude commenced an assault under command of such leaders as they had chosen. The ditches were instantly filled with men-at-arms; ladders were set in every direction, and an assault commenced with all imaginable fury, and with every species of weapon known to the destructive science of the age. Flights of arrows darkened the air, culverins roared; and when the assailants had mounted their innumerable ladders, a deadly hand-to-hand conflict with lances, swords, axes, gisarmes, and leaden maces raged all around. Over the whole tumult, the loud insulting laugh of Gladesdale was continually audible, while he performed incredible deeds of arms, and animated his men to warlike fury with railing at a woman's daring in assailing them.

Meanwhile, the French seemed, in the words of an eyewitness, to consider themselves immortal. Three times were they repulsed by sheer force and blows, almost hand to hand. The ditches were filled with mangled bodies, and numerous wounded were borne from the scene of conflict; no success rewarded their persevering efforts—and yet as often as they retreated in confusion from the assault, so often did the inspiring voice and gestures of the Maid send them back to it with increased impetus. It was on one of these occasions, that Gladesdale discerned her amidst the mass of warriors who advanced to a new assault, running abreast with their shields joined after the fashion of the ancient tortoise.

"Wulfstan of Warbois!" he exclaimed, turning to an archer whose bruised and battered head denoted a late familiarity with warfare. "Thou art held to be a good archer since Robin Hood died! Let me now see trial of thy skill, and if thou hittest yonder yelling huntswoman between those swells in her armour, Bedford himself shall reward thee."

Wulfstan, who had crawled into the Tournelles with difficulty on the night after the storming of St. Loup, and who was still dizzy with his blow from the mace of La Hire, nevertheless attempted to obey. He raised his bow, and aimed a shaft; but as he did so, a strange feeling of wonder and apprehension, and compassion for the wretched girl, whose soul he believed his success would at once dispatch into hell, came over him. His heart trembled in his breast, and the consciousness of the terror which possessed him increased it to such a degree, that his face grew lividly white, and the bow dropped powerlessly from his hands.

"I cannot draw the shaft—a hand of cold lead clutches my wrists!" he exclaimed.

"Dastard, thou liest! It is thy cold heart that fails!" returned the fierce leader, who observed with indignation the effect produced on the hearers. "Give me the bow, and I will learn if mine old craft hath altogether deserted me which first made King Henry take note of me when I was a simple yeoman as thou art, save that I was in

my senses! This armour clogs me; but look all of ye, and learn how yeomen win knight's spurs."

As he spoke, Sir Thomas Gladesdale snatched up the bow, and fitting an arrow to the string, took a deliberate aim at Jeanne d'Arc. His soldiery looked on with intense expectation, and every eye pursued the flight of the shaft with equal rapidity.

"Aha, it is in the white indeed, if her bosom be not as brown as her cheek!" shouted Gladesdale, as the arrow struck the Maid between the left shoulder and neck, and plunged deeply into the flesh. The English soldiers raised a deafening shout of joy, and fully expected to behold the magic leader fall. But although Jeanne reeled back a few paces, and grew ghastly pale, she recovered her self-possession almost instantly, and tore the arrow from her wound before it had well ceased vibrating in it. A rush of blood followed through the joints of her armour which it had passed, but she waved the crimson arrow triumphantly aloft, shouting "Forward!—Ye see they cannot harm whom God protects!" This decisive proof to the contrary was taken as she had declared, and the assault was renewed with frantic rage.

But the English were now restored to their native courage by the daring of their leader, and his seeming success; for shortly afterwards Jeanne disappeared from the scene of action. Dunois persuaded her that the sight of her wound, which she would not suffer to be dressed and merely staunched with some cotton rag, discouraged the soldiery. She retired to a neighbouring vineyard, which commanded a view of the whole conflict, and alighting from her horse, burst into a passionate prayer to the saints who had sent her, to keep their plighted promises, and show her how to redeem France.

Whilst thus engaged, her eyes were continually fixed on the scene of strife, which every moment varied. Now it was the French who mounted to an assault—now the English who dashed them headlong back. Now the cannoneers and archers exhausted their skill and weapons at a distance, and then the knights and men-at-arms rushed in shouting masses down ditches and up ramparts to a hand-to-hand conflict. The artillery of the Tournelles meanwhile continued to pour destructive missiles over the heads of the English into the ranks of their assailants.

Suddenly Jeanne's eyes filled with a wild light, and she sprang on her feet, "I see well," she exclaimed, "that Talbot intends to assault the town; therefore we must send it some rescue, and keep those in the Tournelles well employed in their own behalf! Who will do me this service, and return with the citizens of Orleans to the defence of their homes?"

"I will, Jeanne, though loth to leave this merry assault; but I am yet too stiff with my late bruises to be of much use here," said a knight, whom Jeanne instantly recognised as the one she had rescued on the first sortie she made.

"It shall be so. I have seen that you are a gallant soldier, Sir Nicole de Giresme!" replied the Maid. "Return to Orleans and man the walls against Talbot; and so he will deem *our* siege is raised

But might it not be that thou couldst assail the Tournelles from the town?"

"The bridge is shattered in two arches, and all the artillery is here with Maître Jean," replied the knight of St. John.

"Tut, valiant men need only their arms and teeth! What say you, Nicole de Giresme; will you be undying in minstrels' songs with me?" said Jeanne. "The English suspect no danger on that side, and so may the more readily find it; for the wolf comes not where the dogs howl! Those broken arches are not broader than the two noble beech-trees are long wherewith Jean has barricaded the bridge. I marked it well, for methought it was strange to see them blossom still in the dust. Our Lady aiding, cross the air with them, and assault our enemies in the back!"

"I go—be death or life my speed!" replied the knight, and setting spurs to his horse, he flew with the tidings of his mission to a spot where Dunois, and some of the other leaders, exhausted with toil, were watching the progress of a new assault.

"Ho, by my fay, we had forgotten Orleans!" said Dunois. "If Talbot stirs, 'tis time we returned; and indeed we but waste it to tarry before these stubborn walls! The assault shall cease, and we will return with our aching sides to Orleans, for, this day, the Maid's prophecies cannot come to pass!"

Nearly all the captains had for some time been of this opinion, and the Marshal de Raix had been urging it with vehemence. The trumpets sounded a recall from the assault; and as soon as it was desisted from, proclaimed a retreat throughout the host. Nicole de Giresme was meanwhile dispatched into Orleans with a large body of the citizens, affrighted with news of Talbot's intentions, which could no longer be doubted. The banner of St. George flourished in triumph from the summits of the Tournelles, and a joyful salvo of artillery at the same time announced the success of Gladesdale to his countrymen.

The French had lost heart considerably from the moment when Jeanne d'Arc disappeared from among them. They began to remark the number of their wounded, and to mount to the assault with fainter cheer. The summons to retreat was obeyed with somewhat too much alacrity, and threatened to become so disorderly and confused as to allow the enemy opportunities of retaliation he was not likely to neglect.

It was some time before the cessation of all the uproar and movement of attack excited Jeanne's suspicion of the state of events. She was watching, with devouring eagerness and attention, the splendid glitter of arms and standards in the westering sun on the opposite shore, announcing that Talbot's troops still advanced from their cantonments. But Jean of Lorraine suddenly made his appearance before her with a countenance full of grief, and sobbing as if he had lost some dear relative, declared that should the retreat be effected with the haste it had been set about, he must perforce abandon his chief darlings and pride, his four great culverins called the Apostles of Mercy.

"Retreat! what retreat? Ha! who talks of retreating now when we are on the brink of victory?" exclaimed Jeanne. "Let me see him who talks of retreat, and I will slay him with a look! Ho, friends!" she continued, flying rather than galloping into the midst of the confused French masses. "What mean ye? I command ye to stay, or be yielded over to the English, and die of dishonest wounds in the back! Hark, Gladesdale laughs at ye! as all the chivalry of the earth will at ye, false knights and falser Frenchmen, whose hearts fail now more basely than curs before the tusks of the wild boar!"

The apparition of Jeanne d'Arc produced an instantaneous and truly magic effect on the multitude. One universal shout of joy proclaimed her safety, which the dispirited soldiery had begun to doubt; and wherever she went the preparations for retreat ceased, the confusion subsided, and men resumed their weapons with eager cries for battle.

In this manner she approached the point occupied by the French captains, who marked the marvels she wrought on her way with mingled astonishment and discomfiture.

"It is thou, false marshal, hast counselled this coward flight!" exclaimed Jeanne to De Raix, as she checked her foaming steed. "The valorous bastard forgets not so much that he is of the very blood of France, albeit through his mother's shame! La Hire, what avails all thy noble deeds to-day, if the field is lost? Saintrailles, who counts the wounds of the vanquished?—But go, if you will, fair knights,—the people will remain with their peasant girl."

"It is well thou art even such, or I might be angry with thy scolding tongue!" said De Raix, furiously smiling.

"Jeanne, it is in vain to stay longer. The English have regained all heart—our soldiery are spent—and Talbot, they say, attacks the town!" replied Dunois, his generous blood colouring his cheeks with shame at the reproach.

"No, for I have seen that Talbot, on the contrary, awaits an attack from us, or to assail us as we attempt to repass the river, at what advantage, being beaten and woful, your old experience, Saint Severe, may tell!" said Jeanne, vehemently. "Therefore, again I tell ye the people shall not stir, but shall remain to re-enter Orleans with me over the bridge of the Tournelles. This is as true as that God lives and reigns in this blue heaven above us! Grant me but one short hour, brave bastard! We have light enough left until we can fire this pile to make darkness blush! I demand but one hour's pause, and one more assault, and victory is ours!"

"Let us return to Orleans, and listen no longer to this madwoman, or while we gnaw at the bone, Talbot will suck the marrow!" exclaimed De Raix.

"By my father's beard, no;" said Dunois, the enthusiasm of glory reviving in his chafed blood. "Moreover, it is certain the soldiers will not obey us, and Talbot believes those boasting culverins, and waits to batter our sides as we pass the Loire. It shall be as the maiden has said. One hour's pause—one more assault—and victory!"

These words, uttered in a loud shout, were instantly repeated in a thousand hoarse, eager echoes, and implicitly obeyed.

"Eat and drink, and rest awhile, my valiant brothers!" said Jeanne, in that clear, rich, ringing voice, that stirred the hearts of the French soldiery, like a warlike music. "Watch me as I stand in yonder vineyard, and when I raise my standard, return to the assault, for, without fail, the English shall no longer have force to defend themselves, and shall be crushed in their towers and bulwarks like vipers under the harrow!"

Jeanne then returned to her former elevated position, while the people set to work at refreshing themselves with as much zeal as if some religious rite had been enjoined, of efficacy to win them the stoutly-defended forts of their enemies. And it was very fortunate for the French that their leaders complied with her request. Talbot, believing the attack on the Tournelles had failed, made preparations to interrupt the passage of the river, which, in the confusion of a retreat, might well have proved fatal to the whole French host. He had drawn nearly all his heavy artillery from the forts along the shore, and himself with a chosen power prepared to float on rafts below the bridge of Orleans, to prevent the entrance of the French boats. Gladesdale would undoubtedly sally from his bastilles, and attack his retreating enemies in the rear; so that their destruction, but for the resolution of their woman-leader, was assured.

Jeanne continued to watch with intense anxiety for some signs of the diversion she had ordered to be attempted by Nicole de Giresme, when Friar Richard made his appearance with a surgeon, and insisted that her wound should be dressed. The good confessor was rarely visible during the heat of conflicts, but he always turned up in some unaccountable manner as soon as there was a lull or a triumph.

"My wound?—I have none, good father!" said Jeanne, with perfect simplicity.

"Yea, and one that will slay thee, daughter, if it is not tended; look at the clots on thy scarf and breastplate!" replied Richard. "Unarm, and let us apply some of this healing unguent—the oil of olives and lard. I charge thee, on my blessing, and as thou wouldst thrive, suffer thy wound to be medicated."

"As you will, father, but I shall not die this bout," replied Jeanne, with a grand smile.

"Art thou a prophetess, too, in this, daughter," said the friar, with a crafty tone, "and canst thou tell how and when it shall please God to take thee?"

"Nay, I know not when, nor where, nor in what hour, but it is not now," replied Jeanne; yet some shadow of her terrific destiny passed over her countenance, as she alighted, adding, with a profound sigh, "Unarm me not, good chirurgeon, for at present I watch over the fate of France, and may not heed mine own."

The mediciner was about, in compliance with this request, to remove the ensanguined wrapping from the wound upon which it had been thrust at the junctions of the armour, when suddenly sparks

seemed to flash around the eyelashes of the Maid, and she vaulted from his hands upon her steed, with a single effort.

"Farewell! we have no time now—we must observe—the moment of victory is at hand!" she exclaimed. "Ho, it is well: the English on the Tournelles gaze at us so fondly, they note nothing that occurs behind! Good citizens!—see how softly they lower the broad beech-trees with Jean de Lorraine's cranes! Ho, that spans not the arch! —Where may they rest it?—Marry, he who made those mighty benches shall be well paid, in Rheims!—Look, they are firmly set!— Now plank it, now plank it, excellent carpenters!—It is done! Who crosses first? Nicole de Giresme, valiant knight, is it thou?—Victory, victory!—to the assault again, brothers!—all is yours!"

Then raising her standard with the appointed signal, Jeanne d'Arc set her horse to its wildest speed, and returned to the field of battle. All eyes had watched for it as for a summons to life or death, and with one tremendous shout that shook the sky, the whole mass—knights, archers, citizens, men-at-arms, women and children, the very marauders and hangers-on of the camp, rolled to the summits of the English bastion! It was at this moment that the attention of Gladesdale and his knights was distracted by the shouts of an assault on the side of the Tournelles, where they had imagined themselves inaccessible. The English soldiery in the bastille, exhausted with fatigue, and appalled with the extraordinary nature of this renewed attack, believing themselves in some inexplicable manner surrounded, suddenly abandoned all their defences, threw down their arms, and fled in the wildest disorder towards the Tournelles. The valiant Gladesdale himself was obliged to retire before the overwhelming sea of combatants that poured in upon him and his captains. They endeavoured vainly to contest the narrow passage that opened on the bridge from the bastile, for at this moment a cry was raised that the castle of the Tournelles was on fire, and the fugitives came rushing back in such multitudes that they forced those who were retreating again to advance. Nicole de Giresme and his compány were indeed engaged in casting every species of burning material they could obtain, with lighted torches, into the Tournelles, from the side of Orleans. The cross-barred casements began to glare, and its defenders, seized with a panic similar to that which had taken the holders of the bastille, fled out on the bridge, so that the two parties of fugitives met with a shock.

"Gladesdale, Gladesdale," cried a voice above all the uproar, "yield, yield, to the King of Heaven! Strumpet hast thou called me, and I am none, but a woman that will take great pity on thee and thine!"

"Never, sorceress! St. George and Talbot to our aid!" shouted the unfortunate and valiant knight; and they were the last distinct words he ever uttered, for, as he spoke, the bridge, which was an ancient wooden structure, yielded to the overwhelming and tumultuous pressure upon it. A terrific crack, and then an uproar as of a falling world was heard, all the timbers yielded with a mighty crash of thunder, and the English survivors of that sanguinary contest were

precipitated into the stream, or crushed among the massive fragments of the wood-work and masonry. Gladesdale himself, covered with his massive armour, sunk into the waters like a huge rock, and never once reappeared above them. The yells and cries of seven hundred mangled and drowning Englishmen swelled the massive shout of triumph with which their enemies saluted the appearance of Jeanne d'Arc, as she emerged with her standard on the summit of the conquered bastille. Nearly at the same moment Nicole de Giresme rent down the standard of St. George from the battlements of the Tournelles.

The conflagration in that pile was eagerly extinguished by the victorious citizens of Orleans, who regarded it as one of the chief strengths of their town. But the French captains determined, according to their former plan, to burn the bastille, which was only of service to annoy and blockade the citizens. This measure completed its evacuation; and among the fugitives who had not left the fortification, and consequently had not shared the fate of Gladesdale and his companions, was Wulfstan of Warbois.

We cannot, as sincere chroniclers, ascribe this circumstance to any excess of courage on the part of the verdurer. Brave as a lion against mortal men and mortal weapons, Wulfstan was more fearful than an old woman, or a child, of those agencies which he now believed to be at work. Blinded by terror, he ran into the very danger he sought to shun, and leaping down the lofty bulwarks from an embrazure in which, it must be confessed, he had hidden himself, Wulfstan found himself in the hands of John of Lorraine and the pikemen who guarded his cannons. These soldiers levelled a dozen weapons at him at once, and were about to make an end of the mortal existence of Wulfstan of Warbois, when a commanding voice ordered them to desist. The verdurer glanced at his deliverer, and fell senseless on the field, for it was the sorceress herself!

"He is badly hurt! Our Lady forgive me that I should weep for pity of these Englishmen!" said Jeanne, gazing at the bruised visage of her quondam admirer. "By my staff! is it even thou, Fastolfe's man, of Domremy?" she added, with a start and a smile mingled with the flow of tears that came to her eyes. "He was, methinks, of the honester order of those rogues at Commercy, and we have carnage enow already! Spare him, and he shall be my messenger to Talbot, to entreat him once more to cease reddening our fields and rivers with the blood of his countrymen."

CHAPTER XVII.

ORLEANS.

"Advance our waving colours on the walls;
Rescued is Orleans from the English wolves:—
Thus Joan la Pucelle hath performed her word."—*Henry VI.*

THE ex-verdurer of Commercy thus found mercy where he least expected it; but the extreme terror and confusion he manifested on recovering his senses astonished and amused the French captains who now assembled round Jeanne to witness the firing of the bastille. He kept crossing himself incessantly during the whole time she uttered her message to Talbot, as if he heard some fearful incantation. And yet it was a pathetic entreaty to the English captains to hear reason, as she called it, and leave the ravaged bosom of France in peace. The sight of human bloodshed, and death in its horrors, softened to a natural and most touching womanishness the heart of the heroic girl of Domremy. She wept profusely while she uttered the charitable appeal which her simplicity and tenderness of heart conjointly prompted.

"Ay, let him go in good time, for if Jeanne's tears fail, her sword hath arguments more moving," added La Hire. "Tell Talbot from us all that it is his turn now, and that if he do not speedily depart we will come and root him out of his rat-hole at St. Laurent."

Thus variously instructed, Wulfstan was informed that he should be allowed to leave Orleans by the gate nearest to St. Laurent, as soon as the French host had returned to the city. This was accomplished by means of a bridge zealously constructed on the plan of that between the Tournelles and Orleans, by the French soldiery after the demolition of the bastille, that Jeanne might literally fulfil her prophecy, and re-enter the city by its bridge.

All the bells of Orleans were ringing in joyful unison in his ears when the verdurer was thrust out of the gates in front of the fortification of St. Laurent. No hunted hare ever made half the speed he displayed in crossing the intermediate distance, until challenged by the sentinels of Talbot's camp.

The full extent of the calamity was already known in the lines of the blockade, and the consternation among the soldiery was only equalled by the dissensions and wrath of their commanders. The former lost all courage, and openly murmured that they would no longer contend with a hideous sorceress, who had all the powers of hell at command. The latter upbraided each other, as having occasioned the ruin by evil advice, or inert action. The earl of Suffolk bitterly reminded Talbot, that it was his peremptory counsel that

persuaded the rest to stay on the northern shore of the river, in expectation of an attack which incessantly thundered on the opposite one.

The only point that could not be disputed was, that the blockade was now, to all useful purposes, destroyed. Not a single English fort or soldier remained on the south of the Loire, to hinder communication between the city and the friendly countries of Touraine and Berry. Provisions and men could be furnished at pleasure in those directions, and it was hopeless to attempt retrieving positions which had been destroyed, with an army that could not keep them.

A council was held on these disastrous circumstances, and was in full dispute, when Wulfstan of Warbois arrived in St. Laurent. Talbot, as well as the rest of the English captains, now perceived the great but scarcely avoidable fault they had committed, by remaining in isolated posts, exposed to the attacks of so enterprising an enemy. But Talbot, with his characteristic daring, insisted that the only means left to repair this error, was by resuming the offensive, and attacking Orleans on the side they still possessed, with all their forces. The earl of Suffolk overruled this plan, almost for the first time since he had assumed the command, with decision and energy. He pointed out the extreme dejection of the troops, justified by the bloody overthrow of the most famous leaders and valiant men-at-arms. And reverting to an idea which many a glorious field had made familiar to the English mind, he proposed to concentrate all the host, by abandoning the lines of the blockade, and await the French in order of battle, if they sallied forth to destroy them. The impetuosity, and vain-glorious confidence, which had so often precipitated the French into defeat and ruin might again urge them to try the fortune of a stricken field with their adversaries.

Talbot was contending against this project, as a repetition of the disastrous policy of the day, when Wulfstan of Warbois was admitted, on the assurance that he brought a message from the French. The tidings brought by the verdurer—the details of the massacre of their friends—the vaunting accompaniments with which La Hire seasoned the mild entreaties of Jeanne d'Arc, construed into insults more bitter—fired the hot blood of Talbot so fiercely, that he lost all consideration but the desire of revenge.

"Says she so, God's life! What, if Talbot do not skim the brine like a recreant trout disturbed by a child, this woman will chase him home to England!" he exclaimed. "What raving stuff is this she sends us? 'If Talbot yields not obedience, he shall meet with her on a field where the beautiful Oriflamme shall wave like a woof of lightning in his eyes!' So be it. Out on thee, witch! I spit on thee and thy threats. Suffolk, I yield my counsel, and am willing that we should abide in battle array before St. Laurent, to see this wench with her thunder and lightning petticoats, at more leisure!"

It was thus unanimously resolved, and the night of this stormy day was occupied in withdrawing the English forces from the long line of the blockade, and concentrating them around St. Laurent. But terror had been busy in all the ranks; the very breath of the

summoners wavered in the trumpets; and so numerous were the desertions on that night, that the swords of the French, gory as they were, thinned not the English ranks so much by many a score. The army was affrighted with its own losses, and the most valiant commanders were dismayed, when the muster at dawn revealed in characters, glaring as the writing on the wall, the dismal state of their affairs.

The French had meanwhile watched the proceedings of their enemies from Orleans with interest, even while abandoning themselves to a delirium of triumph and joy. Nor had the English captains miscalculated on the national vanity and rashness of success. The moment it was perceived that the besiegers intended to offer battle, the majority of the captains in Orleans were eager to accept it. The number of the French soldiery, without reckoning the citizens of Orleans, now more than equalled that of their enemies, and they were in the full flush of triumph, while their challengers, despite their menacing attitude, were in the sadness and gloom of defeat. Most of the captains had also another motive. By order of her chirurgeons, Jeanne d'Arc kept her bed in Orleans, until her wound should close. To win a field of battle in her absence would retrieve them a share in the recent glories, which the popular love and enthusiasm ascribed altogether to her.

Dunois and La Hire with others of that famous chivalry were not actuated by such unworthy motives; but the highest-mettled blood of France was in their veins, and most of them had lost honours which they were anxious to regain from the once victorious enemy before them. A manly sentiment might even make them rejoice that the heroic woman who had hitherto foremost dared the dangers of war, should be safe from a still more perilous strife on a pitched field of battle, where, according to the practice of the age, strength of arm rather than skill, was necessary. These various motives conduced to make all agree in not revealing their project to the Maid; and none were more astonished than the captains of the French host, drawn up in battle array beneath the walls of Orleans, and preparing for a decisive contest with the besiegers, than to behold Jeanne ride from the gate Regnart and down their lines with her consecrated standard in her hand, and everywhere command the legions to halt.

"Ye shall not battle on this day," she said, in a tone that everywhere met with implicit obedience. "It is Sunday: a day when He who made the heavens and the earth rested! But not therefore rest ye from this work, for it is good, and good works may be done on this day. But because our Lord was the son of a woman, too, and full of mercy and compassion, He wills that ye shall allow the English to depart in peace, if they will, and fill quiet graves in their own lands. To-day ye shall but use the shield, but if they tarry another sunrise, your swords shall be as the scythes of death, and level all this field!"

"This foolish woman comes to spoil all; let us not heed her womanishness, but order a general charge!" exclaimed De Raix.

Jeanne approached at this moment near enough to hear the words; and her face, which was very pale, flushed scarlet with anger.

"Ha, blasphemous fellow! wherefore is it thou dost continually oppose thyself to the orders of our Lady and St. Michael?" she said, in a voice audible along the whole line of battle. "Wilt thou measure strengths with me then? Advance thy standard and mark how many follow it when mine halts here,—and halt it shall until this high sun sinks below the level plain of Orleans!"

"Dost thou dispute the authority of the king's marshals of battle, woman?" returned De Raix.

"I am the marshal of the battles of the King of kings, man! let that answer thee," said Jeanne. "This is His war, for He is ever on the side of justice, and it is just that every people should possess the inheritance He has given it! France is ours and not England's."

"It needed no witchcraft to tell us that; yet surely the English belie thee not, else how couldst thou learn tidings of our secret resolve, on thy bed of sickness?" said De Raix, continuing with a malicious and incredulous glance at Friar Richard, who carried his crucifix beside the Maiden as usual. "Unless some meddling eaves-dropper, whom I note ever snuffing in holes and corners like a terrier that scents rats, carried the news?"

"Foolish man! the fiend has only power to betray the counsels of the wicked!" retorted Jeanne, unheeding this innuendo. "And learn, to thy confusion, that it was that glorious voice, tuned to the music of the heavenly harps, which first warned me forth on my deeds, that brought me tidings of your purpose as I lay lonely and sadly in my chamber, commanding that the fortunes of France should not be essayed to-day!"

This revelation, communicated with a prophetic grandeur of look and manner, struck general awe. The soldiers repeated it in murmurs among themselves; spears sank; and the bent bow relaxed as if of its own accord; and De Raix very clearly perceived that he must advance alone, if at all. The agencies, whatever they might be, that directed the actions of Jeanne d'Arc, were evidently not willing that the glory and merit of her interposition should be snatched from her, or even shared.

Or it might have been a fiat of the invisible destiny governing events, and which had determined the redemption of France. The English army, finding itself defied and bearded by an enemy so often vanquished, encouraged by the daring of its leader and the absence of the supernatural championess from the ranks of the foe, was fast remming the spirit that won Agincourt. But when her re-appearance was avouched by ocular testimony, when the extraordinary effect of her arrival was observed, which resembled the sudden pause produced by the lull of a wind hurrying on a tempest, the English host was struck with universal dismay. Horrors infinite as imagination seemed to prepare over their devoted heads. A species of ophthalmia assailed the very senses of the soldiery. The host before them multiplied to one of infinite numbers; the air seemed peopled with fiery forms; and, to some affrighted gazes, the walls of Orleans crowded

with skeleton defenders armed with darts, which they shook with derisive laughs at the baffled assailants. In truth, the whole famine-struck population of the city poured forth thither, in delirious triumph, to witness the confusion of their enemies.

Every moment of this threatening pause increased the terrors of the devoted host. The most valiant soldiers looked pale; stout yeomen and men-at-arms dropped in strange swoons—men whom wounds and bloodshed had never subdued to such weakness. An articulate murmur, and yet scarcely audible, pervaded all the ranks, and spoke of retreat, and of the impossibility of withstanding supernatural arms! The camp-followers silently disappeared; numerous banners vanished from the field like dew in a hot sunshine; and the boldest captains of the English host began to apprehend that this gradual desertion would end in open and shameless flight. Talbot himself—with a rage and anguish to which no powers of description could do justice—Talbot himself, grinding his teeth like a lion in the toils, could not but acknowledge it, when, in refutation of this opinion, and without asking any consent from the earl of Suffolk, he ordered the whole battle to advance and charge the French, in the name of God and St. George! Not a man stirred. On the contrary, a shuddering withdrawal of the whole line was visible, as when a strong wind passes along a cornfield.

The result of the mounted council of war which assembled around Talbot after this revelation was—THE RAISING OF THE SIEGE OF ORLEANS. The English captains, furiously ascribing the whole blame to each other, and resolving to separate their forces the moment they arrived at a safe distance from the enemy, gave order for a departure. Towards noonday—without striking a blow—the English host melted away from the gaze of its enemies like a mighty iceberg drifting from the view of a ship hesitating on the waves in sight of its menacing bulk! The flames of the sixty forts, with which Orleans was encircled on the north, belted the vast plain with fire, in the gaze of the last of the English host who turned to survey it, shaking his spear in the air with bootless rage. It was Talbot—and yet there were tears upon his cheek! tears such as only spirits so mighty and so mightily rebuked can shed!

CHAPTER XVIII.

LOCHES.

"So purely and so vastly dawns the sun
Over the snowy Alps, as love in thee,
And all unconscious as their valleys, still
Slumber thy soul's deep depths."—*Anonymous.*

THE court of France removed several leagues nearer to Orleans on the news of Jeanne's first successes. It was held in the castle of Loches, near Tours, when the amazing tidings of the raising of the siege were brought to Charles VII.

With national variability the entire French people, including the gravest councillors as well as the multitude, abandoned themselves to a delirium of joy and triumph. From the depths of despair, in a moment they sped to the highest flight of hope. The fame of the Maid of Orleans, as she was now universally called, flew over all France, and like a radiant messenger everywhere roused the most enthusiastic belief and daring. In a moment the gloomy prestige of defeat and fear had passed from the hearts of the French to those of their enemies. The English seemed to hide themselves rather than retire to their fortresses on the Loire; and their commanders, irritated with mutual jealousies and heartburnings, committed the crowning error of dividing their forces and refusing to make any effort in common.

These mighty successes silenced envy, and even stilled for awhile the watchful suspicions in the heart of La Trimouille. All that he heard of the Maid, of her simplicity and energetic independence of character, encouraged him to trust that she was not what he had at first dreaded—an instrument devised by his enemies to his overthrow. In this persuasion, La Trimouille was among the busiest of those who planned the triumphal reception of Jeanne and her accompanying warriors, on their return from Orleans. But the popular enthusiasm scarcely needed the gaudy glories designed by the French court to greet its deliverer. Although the most famous captains of France were in her company, the people, with the unerring instinct which gives its natural impulses a divine authority, recognized in her only its preserver and rescuer, covered her only with the honours and blessings due to the title. The arms of great nobles and knights were doubtless in the conflict fought for France, but it was her spirit—the people felt—that won it.

Nor was it merely as a human warrior and deliverer that the crowding masses which covered the highways to catch but a glimpse of the victorious maiden as she passed, gazed with such intensity of admiration and curiosity upon her. The prodigious marvel of beholding a

successful and most valiant soldier in the person of a young village girl, unparalleled in all the ages of Christendom, was the least part of the spectacle sought by those desiring eyes. The celestial mission which she announced, and had so gloriously asserted, exaggerated by popular rumour and ignorance, persuaded the spectators that they contemplated visually a being of another world, or at least one who was familiar with the wonderful unknown whose dim shores have only occasionally loomed through the night of material existence. The people imagined they gazed on one who had stood in actual presence in the courts of heaven, had spoken face to face with the angels and saints, whose reverence was so deeply implanted in the believing heart of the age. They could not satiate themselves with the spectacle; and the liberality of the popular sentiment ascribed the brightness of genius and glory shining round the brows of the youthful warrioress to the radiance of her celestial dignity. All the modest refusals and tearful entreaties of Jeanne could not prevent the people in many places from praying to her as devoutly as to the most favoured saint in the calendar. The soldiers hung her image on their breasts next to those of the Virgin Mary, as an amulet of safety, and regarded her with almost equal adoration.

Attended by an enthusiastic crowd who accompanied her, barefooted, and chanting hymns of thanksgiving in chorus to the sonorous voice of Friar Richard, Jeanne, and the principal part of the captains from Orleans, entered Loches. As an honour due to a religious victor, and one whose cause he had so zealously urged, the archbishop of Rheims went out to meet her, with a retinue of all the clergy under his control. And with all the reasons he had to know that human contrivance was in the matter, the prelate could scarcely himself believe that a divine agency was not at work in the achievements of the girl of Domremy. Even when he had noted the self-satisfied and important wink and smile of Friar Richard, the archbishop continued vaguely impressed with the idea of something supernatural as he gazed upon her.

Amidst all her triumphs, Jeanne preserved the reverence and modesty of her earlier estate. She alighted and knelt at the prelate's stirrup to receive his blessing, which he pronounced with tears of joy and triumph. There was even a compassionate and paternal tenderness in his tone and manner which went to the core of that fiery and sensitive nature. "Ah, father! heaven bless you for these tears," she exclaimed. "You alone have felt that I need pity, too!"

The procession resumed its march, and traversing the garlanded streets of Loches, ascended the eminence on which the castle stands. The whole court was assembled in the great hall to receive the victorious captains with every possible honour.

It seemed, indeed, as if by some stroke of magic the French nobles had suddenly regained the means of splendour. Moreover, great numbers who had withdrawn from a falling cause now gathered round its reviving hopes with their well-husbanded resources in hand. At all events, it might have been thought, a country girl, unaccustomed to any species of magnificence, would be dazzled by so much of roya

pomp as was exhibited in the preparations made to greet her. But she passed through all like one unconscious, or absorbed in some engrossing thought, scarcely giving a glance to the objects around. Her step was eager and hasty until she reached the entrance of a chamber at the end of the hall, called the "chambre de retraicte," where the king awaited the arrival with his chief councillors. Dunois walked on one side of Jeanne d'Arc, and the archbishop on the other; and the former, who had never seen her hesitate in battle, beheld her now pause and falter on her advance, with much surprise.

"What, Jeanne, art thou of my mood in this respect also, and tremble before these gaudy, velvet-spoken courtiers that call themselves the king's friends, while I care not how many of his enemies I face?" said Dunois.

"It is not so, brave bastard! I know not how it is with me," replied Jeanne, in a low, agitated tone. "I would not be thanked; they give me too much honour; and he will thank me, too,—the royal dauphin will thank me, and my heart will swell too full, and they will marvel wherefore I weep."

"And why shouldst thou weep, unless to keep us all company, my daughter, and tears thus be holily licensed?" said the archbishop, drawing her gently on. "Forward, or these silken rogues, who despise themselves, will despise thee indeed if they think their presence awes the deliverer of Orleans."

Jeanne started, and resuming her naturally high and lofty bearing, strode forward like the warrior her garb announced. The curtains of the "retraicte" were drawn back, and the king appeared seated in state side by side with the queen, beneath a canopy held over them by some attendants, and surrounded by the most distinguished personages of the court. The Lady of Beauty was there, blooming like a sunlit poppy, in the flush of her rich blood and joy. Her usual coadjutrix, the lady of La Trimouille, with a strangely sad but deeply interested expression, stood behind the queen's chair. And yet her lord's sallow features were singularly brightened, and those of the argentier beamed with satisfaction. The duke of Alençon concealed his vexation at having relinquished his share in the glories of Orleans in pique, under a mask of smiles and gaiety. The entire aspect of men's faces was of delight and cheerfulness. The languor and melancholy in the countenance of Charles himself had entirely vanished, and an expression of the most winning sweetness and tenderness shone over its beautiful lines. The moment Jeanne appeared, he arose from his chair of state, and advancing several steps, raised the heroine, who had thrown herself on her knees before him, in his arms, and kissed her repeatedly, with an enthusiasm of joy and gratitude not unmarked. Observers also noted that Jeanne shuddered with a strange emotion in this embrace; her pale complexion crimsoned, and she withdrew herself from it as speedily as possible by sinking once more on her knees, and embracing those of the king in a wild passion of tears and broken ejaculations.

"Forgive me, Jeanne! never until now have I kissed a famous soldier that had no beard; yet none among all the valiant men who

serve me deserves gratitude so unmeasured!" exclaimed Charles. "Ask what thou wilt that half-recovered France can give, and it is thine. Care not who smiles to see us embrace, for, since the people of Orleans have resolved to raise a monument in our honour on their bridge, all the posterity of wayfarers shall behold us upon it, thus, linked in one another's arms."

"Nay, sire; but as I have already prayed the citizens, both kneeling before Him who alone throughout the universe is the superior of the king of France—before the cross of God!" said Jeanne, still weepingly; "but if I may ask a boon for the deeds wrought at Orleans,—and ah, gentle dauphin, these marshals and knights, and valiant nobles who are with me, will witness I have done what I promised, there; that the siege of Orleans is so raised that the terror of the means shall guard it henceforward better than a hundred thousand spears,—I would pray you to tarry no longer listening to tedious counsels and misgivings of grey-bearded men, as you did when I first appeared, but come with me in all speed to Rheims to receive your glorious crown of France!"

"What say you, La Trimouille? Yes, by the blessed cross, we will believe in her without an instant's doubt, and depart at once for Rheims!" exclaimed Charles, with a roused enthusiasm and energy that usually slumbered in his character.

"Sire," replied the minister, not pleased with an exertion of free-will, "though the will of Heaven be in these matters, it plainly appears that we are required to use human prudence in their prosecution, else what need of a single lance or of more than a loaf and a fish in the relief of Orleans? It is true thou hast done marvels, maiden, but this enterprise of Rheims is madness. We cannot advance and leave the Loire unswept of our enemies, who have but retired into dens and fortresses, and will come howling forth the moment we are gone. Knowest thou not that a hundred and fifty miles of country lie between Loches and Rheims, all in the hands of our enemies, and that Rheims itself is theirs?"

"All this, messire, I know full well," replied Jeanne. "But were the king's enemies more numerous than gnats in the forest at eventide, they shall disappear before him as those before the thunder-shower. Let him but go with me, and I swear that I will conduct him and all his company in safety to the city of Rheims and the unction of the dove! Ye ought to believe in me, and not waste the time, for I am but to last a year in triumph; and but for ye, that might suffice to deliver all France, and drive the last Englishman, that would not peacefully go, into the sea."

"I have but one good in all this world—but one wealth—and I am willing to hazard it in the keeping of this holy maid," said the queen, in a timid tone, but with a degree of firmness and interference rarely witnessed in her.

"Nor I; nor any of us! All France has no good remaining but its king, and all France is willing that he should go with this warrior—for woman we will not shame her glorious heart to call her!" exclaimed the Lady of Beauty.

"It shall be so, Jeanne; I will go with thee wherever thou wilt," echoed Charles.

"My liege, this should be more thoughtfully weighed ere determined," said La Trimouille, with vexation. "What say you, sir captains, who, methinks, should not be so utterly forgotten in the matter; do ye counsel this rash advance?"

"Certes, I do not; or we shall find Orleans and the Loire in English hands when we return!" said the Marshal de Raix. Others of the captains, who were but little pleased to find the whole glory of success assigned in popular opinion to Jeanne, raised their voices as La Trimouille had expected—in murmurs against the project.

"Dunois and La Hire will, nevertheless, be of my company, and we are enough," said Jeanne, turning with an indignant smile to those generous companions in arms, whose eager assent responded.

"Dunois and La Hire are peerless knights—but—hazard the king with only the convoy of so few?" said Agnes, tremulously; and it seemed as if Jeanne herself was struck with a painful feeling of apprehension at the thought.

"No, lady," she said, looking at the queen, with a deep but stifled sigh. "We will hazard nothing of so dear a pledge. I will clear the Loire, ere we advance one step, of its pestilent water-logs. Who will aid me in this good work?"

"I will aid you, Jeanne; I, the lieutenant of France, a faithful convert to you ever from this hour!" said the duke of Alençon. "Sire, will you suffer me once more to lead your armies, and conquer, abreast with the holy maid?"

"Ah, rogue!" replied the king, smiling at the peculiar expression in the duke's glance. "Dost thou fancy, because our warrior is a woman and thou art a coxcomb, that it shall make thee a good and a wise leader?"

"On certain conditions, to be well weighed and established, your royal cousin may show himself worthy of the trust you have confided in him," said La Trimouille; and the king interrupted him with characteristic gaiety and carelessness.

"Well, let us quarrel about these high and mighty matters at more leisure," he said. "Our present business is to make our valiant captains and leaders welcome in all joyaunce and festivity. We doubt not our prosperity will find favourers enow! Nay, the wise cordwainer, who shod us in one foot, and refused to trust us unpaid for a pair of buskins—yea, of his own loyalty—since our successes at Orleans—he has sent them to us as a present! Let us rejoice and be merry! Yea, look, Jeanne is pale! Alas, we remember she is wounded—wounded for us! Let us see where this stroke was given, which we should much more rightfully have suffered in her behalf."

Jeanne coloured deeply, and slightly indicating the place in her bosom where she had received the arrow, bent again very lowly, and kissing the king's hand with lips that he afterwards remembered quivered, she arose. "Fair duke of Alençon," she continued hurriedly,

"let us be at this work at once, for I have no time to lose on mine errand."

"I shall be heartily glad of your company, Jeanne, but take some graver chirurgeon to tend your hurts than my lord the king," replied the duke, with a laugh that went round on every lip but the young queen's and Jeanne's. On the latter this piece of satirical gaiety, as it was doubtless considered by the courtiers, produced a singular effect. Her brow darkened, and a spasm as if of pain or of anger lightened over it; but she cast down her eyes and was silent until the Lady of Beauty took up the theme.

"Already jealous, Alençon?" she said, with a brilliant glance and smile. "Methinks our lord the king will have more cause to be jealous of his fair cousin when you are abroad in the flowery fields and shadowy valleys of the Loire together."

"What mean you, dame?" then exclaimed Jeanne, raising her eyes with an expression that startled the spectators. "I am, as I have ever said, a simple country girl in all the matters that belong not to the restoration of the sword and sceptre of France; therefore, if you speak of or to me, speak plainly, and leave me not to imagine, as I might else now, that ye are bandying jests on some evil woman of the times, whom in our rough-spoken dialect of Lorraine we call harlots, when I thought you spoke of Jeanne of Domremy!"

The Lady of Beauty flushed the deepest possible hue of scarlet, while the half-stifled titter of the auditors convinced her that her jest was held to be well retorted. And yet it seemed even to her own indignant suspicion that the Maid of Orleans knew not the strength of the blow she had dealt, and was most probably unacquainted with the circumstances that rendered it so poignant. Nevertheless, it overwhelmed her with confusion, and laid the foundation of a sentiment destined at a future period to work Jeanne little good. At this moment her natural good sense and gaiety enabled the Lady of Beauty to rally. "It is very true, we must be more cautious in future," she said; "but in turn, glorious shepherdess, be more cautious how you call out such words in the court; for see you how many look as if they were uncivilly summoned?"

A magnificent banquet was given to the victorious captains; and in the first great feast at which the girl of Domremy had ever been present, she sat on the right hand of a king. But save in the simplicity and sobriety of her appetite, the calm and lofty dignity of her manner, which involved her as if with the atmosphere of a superior being, the most eager curiosity could detect no signs of peasant breeding or apprehensions in her demeanour. It is true she seemed in no wise to study the fashions and courtly graces of her companions. She did everything with perfect simplicity; but nature is never vulgar. It is only bad imitations of artificial things that become so. She spoke little, and was unacquainted with the jargon which in courts forms half the staple of the light sparkling froth of conversation therein discoursed. But she did not pretend to understand it, joined in no laugh which she felt not—in fact, rarely even smiled, listening in general in a contemplative and wondering silence, unless the talk

was of war and the deeds before Orleans. Then she spoke as eloquently as she had done valiantly; described the conflicts so vividly, that they seemed enacting before her again; and, to the astonishment of the captains, detailed each man's achievements with a generosity and acquaintance with facts of which themselves would scarcely have been capable. And none of all that young, rash, and hopeful court and warriors, in their wildest fancies, surpassed the glorious visions of success and triumph she announced in the glowing language of the native poesy in her soul.

But although the royal display around her excited neither awe nor wonder in the heroic country girl, her attention was after awhile visibly caught by the demeanour of the Lady of Beauty. It might be supposed that the loveliness of Agnes, the brilliancy of her attire, her courtly accomplishments and perpetual gaiety, had stirred her peasant admiration. But Agnes could scarcely trust in this flattering interpretation, for she felt there was a strange and ungenial scrutiny in those dark, fiery eyes, so often turned upon her when she used any of her wonted coquetries with the young king. She seemed to herself in some strange manner overawed and rebuked; and perhaps Charles himself was not without some feeling of the kind, for he whispered to the duke of Alençon—"See you? The Maid is not fond of love-play, to begin with! Let us learn if she will like some music better, and she shall foot a measure with us before Dame Agnes herself, whom she eyes with so little pleasure!" Then, raising his voice, he commanded the tables to be cleared, and the minstrels to be ordered in attendance for a dance.

The first great, or at least glaring, breach of etiquette committed by Jeanne d'Arc, on this her first revel at court, was the brief though very gentle and humble denial which she gave to the king himself, who desired to open the "branle," as it was called, with her. Kneeling, as was her wont always when she spoke directly to the king, she intreated him to pardon her, assuring him, with a perfect and noble simplicity of look and tone, that from the moment when she first beheld the saints of God with her eyes she had vowed never to join in any frivolous gaiety. The courtiers laughed, but Charles smiled good-naturedly, and observed—"Friar Thomas of Bretagne has been in your country, doubtless, maiden! he who went to war with our ladies' head-dresses, and had such success that they threw them aside while he was in sight—as they will anything else in the whole world, for ten minutes, if they are bidden in a way they like. But did I deem it any sin,—nor will the most reverend archbishop call it one—I would not ask you even to witness our mirth! Yet is music, too, forbidden, or will you lend a pleased ear to this minstrelsy that is so well loved and trained by the lady of La Trimouille?"

"I shall not weary of music in many an hour, gracious dauphin," replied Jeanne. But unconsciously a sigh heaved the glittering scales of the jasseran, or light coat of mail she wore since she received her wound, when she saw the youthful monarch lead the Lady of Beauty to the place of honour she had declined.

But now a music commenced, the like of which Jeanne had never

yet heard, save in inspired reveries of imagination. The wife of La Trimouille, once a minstreless herself, had attracted to the court the flower of all her former associates. Under her auspices and amidst all the misfortunes of the times, an art which administered so largely to the king's voluptuous tastes still flourished, and had reached an extraordinary degree of perfection. But the girl of Domremy did not require so much to delight her; she who had shaped the harmonies of a celestial choir out of the remote murmurs of the winds amidst a forest, or the casual chant of a wandering friar. Nevertheless there was that in the music, trained and inspired by her who had been Huéline de Troye, which went by some deep sympathy into the inmost heart of Jeanne d'Arc. A core of sadness was in all its brightest and haughtiest strains, or was communicated by the sense that received it; for at times the grandeur and gloom of her destiny amazed and affrighted even the heroic doomed one herself.

Music, of whatever quality, furnishes the vague and multiplying food of thought, in whose rich banquets the imagination loves to revel. It seems as if it were the forgotten language of that blessed birthplace, for ever lost and for ever regretted by mankind, whose meaning finer spirits retrieve in snatches. Or does its dreamy eloquence revive the associations of the past, even the sweetest, as the past ever presents itself to the fugitive slider on time, who feels the transitoriness of existence by its passage—with sadness? A deeper sadness, when a nobler nature feels how wasted are its high thoughts and energies in a vain struggle with the phantom unreality of life!

However this be, Jeanne became speedily lost in a profound and mournful reverie, in which she only continued to see, as if light floated on a silvery mist, the graceful movements of the young king amidst his revelling court. Unconsciously to herself her dark brooding eyelashes gathered heavily with tears, and some one that spoke almost close to her and startled her, so that they fell on her glittering breastplate, first made her aware of the circumstance.

"How is this, maiden? you are left alone!—they are dancing and have forgotten you," said the lady of La Trimouille, in a tone of gaiety. But it changed almost instantly. "What! and do you perceive it already? do you weep?" she continued. "Have you found already how severe a penalty men pay in this world for being good and generous—women at least? Feel you already on your pinnacle—which at a distance seems so bright and glorious, and is so cold and colourless when reached?"

"I feel sorrowful, lady,—I know not well why," replied Jeanne, who had never until now spoken to the wife of the powerful minister, and scarcely knew her yet by that title, but had often noted an expression of compassion and interest in her eyes which stirred her own. "Yet it seems to me strange to see how these courtiers—as methinks ye call yourselves—turn all your worship to yonder fair proud woman, as if she were queen, rather than she who is the noble dauphin's wife, and mother of the children of France!"

"She is more powerful with the king than the king's wife, and

therefore do we courtiers worship her," replied the lady of La Trimouille. "I perceived that you guessed not this when you used your word in her presence; and therefore am I come, in all friendliness, to warn you, loyal maiden, that if you would thrive at court, you must pay suit and homage to Agnes Sorel, before all!"

"Suit and homage!—to Agnes Sorrel!" repeated Jeanne, and her whole countenance flashed, as with the workings of inward fire. "To an adultress!—as methinks your words would call her if they dared utter their own thoughts!—one of those through whom curses are brought down upon us, and the arms of France are unhallowed and profaned!—Suit and homage!—Lady, when thou seest the oak bend his lofty head to the earth below the tramp of a summer wind, then shalt thou behold Jeanne d'Arc bending in homage to Agnes Sorrel! —If it be so—nay, however it be,—I must hasten my work and depart for ever in silence! Alençon shall be with me soon—or never!"

"Take my advice in time, rather, maiden, and strive not to do good to men at all—they are too ungrateful!" replied the lady. "Believe one who has seen much and suffered more, yet who speaks calmly—for the world is now to me little more than a fantastic play, whereat I am a looker-on. It is long since aught has moved, or even saddened me; I am held among the gayest even where Agnes' silvery laugh is loudest; but it saddens me to see thee—that there should still be on earth one noble, generous, and disinterested spirit!—What doth it here among us?—Thou art too pure a victim for this base shrine! Depart, and spare mankind the guilt of destroying thee, too!"

"What mean you, lady? Do you bid me retire in terror of what battle may do against me, or of the vengeance of the English!" returned Jeanne, with great simplicity.

"Thou dost not understand me!—But how should ye?" said the Lady de la Trimouille. "Know ye not there is something more to be feared than the wrath of enemies?—The treachery and ingratitude of friends! Let us say that impossibilities are achieved—that France is saved and thou triumphant—the glory and the marvel of thy sex! What follows then? La Trimouille will flatter thee to some fair-seeming ruin; those whom thou hast saved will hate thee for it. The nobles will betray thee—the people desert thee—the syrens of the court will sing thee to some sweet destruction! Dost thou believe that because Agnes now regards thee as of use, and smiles in the light of her beauty to see how like a warrior thou seemest—that she will suffer a woman long to have power where she rules? Alençon thinks, it may be, that because he is plump and of a good complexion, he can win you to become his instrument? But will he better than the rest endure, that all the glories of our battles should be reaped by a woman's sword, though the harvest truly be indeed all hers? Charles himself—volatile, infirm, unkingly Charles—will do with thee as with all that have ever loved and served him—desert and abandon thee!"

"He will not, he cannot! Look in his princely face and doubt him if thou canst!" returned Jeanne, with vehemence. "Ah! and now I believe what has been told me, Lady de la Trimouille; that

thou wert once a favourer and ally of the rebellious Burgundy, whom Tanneguy Duchâtel slew on the bridge of Montereau! Thou speakest, indeed as such a one should speak."

"It may be! But what say you of Tanneguy Duchâtel?" returned the court lady. "Yea, he hazarded his soul for this kingly king,—and Charles abandoned, exiled him, at the command of the ferocious constable De Richemont, who in turn will add thy destruction to those of all who have dared to serve France without his permission."

"But first I shall perform my mission—in nothing do I doubt it!" replied Jeanne. "Let come what will after, I am ready. And whatever befall, my king's ingratitude I will not apprehend, nor even deem possible, for I will serve him so as never before, nor ever again, shall king be served! With the might of a single arm, and that arm a woman's, will I redeem this first of Christian lands, and raise the fallen throne of Charlemagne from the dust!"

"Go on thy way then, and mayst thou prove a true prophetess in this as well as in the rest!" said the lady, with a sorrowful smile. "But if thou dost not, remember that poets also are held soothsayers, and that the lady of La Trimouille was once the minstreless, Huéline de Troye!"

CHAPTER XIX.

CAMPAIGN OF JARGEAU.

> "Such troops as these in shining arms were seen,
> When Theseus met in fight their maiden queen,
> Such to the field Penthesilea led,
> From the fierce virgin when the Grecians fled."—*Dryden's Virgil.*

After the great feast which celebrated the triumphs of Orleans, Jeanne d'Arc appeared as seldom as possible in the court. She was treated with all imaginable honours, lodged in the castle of Loches, and attended by a retinue as ample as any great noble or leader in those unfortunate times. This was against her own will, but by the resolve of the court and of the archbishop of Rheims, who thought to enhance the vulgar veneration and awe, by exterior pomps and observance round the prophetess. Still she now very rarely entered the courts and councils of Charles VII. unless when compelled by the respect due to her sovereign's command, or the necessity of urging on the preparations for the renewed campaign, which were continually retarded and delayed by the irresolution and apprehensions of the ministers.

Jeanne had apparently discovered that the atmosphere of the court was ill adapted to her breathing. Its lighthearted gaiety and splendour seemed little to delight, but rather to sadden, her naturally contemplative and thoughtful mood. A strange contradiction influenced her even with regard to the king. She shunned his presence as if purposely; yet when she beheld him, her whole being seemed to

irradiate with joy and happiness, her genius resumed its inspiration, and at such moments she had an eloquence that persuaded the coldest and calmest counsellors that her mighty enterprises were more feasible than others of little consequence.

Still delays were interposed. La Trimouille yielded with reluctance to the influence of the large and powerful party, headed by the archbishop Regnault and Agnes Sorel, who incessantly urged the king to take advantage of the popular impetus, and execute the will of its glorious mover. The confusion and consternation of the English were sufficiently obvious and tempting; it seemed not at all impossible to clear the Loire of their defeated and scattered garrisons. But La Trimouille was aware that the duke of Alençon was in secret a partisan of the constable, and dreaded to confide the army necessary for the enterprise to his hands. But the passionate entreaties of the Maid of Orleans, the arguments of her allies, and the enthusiasm of the people, could not long be resisted. The army was at length permitted to march under command of the duke of Alençon and the convoy of the Maid of Orleans, to clear the way for the great enterprise of Rheims. Conditions were agreed to and promised by the duke, which he meant to keep according to circumstances.

So stout of heart and well-appointed an army had not gone to battle in the cause of France since the fatal day of Verneuil, where the duke of Bedford overthrew the whole remaining power of Charles VII. and his Scottish allies. Above all, the populace remarked with wonder the numerous train of artillery, which the labours of John of Lorraine and the assiduous cares of Jeanne d'Arc had organised into the first formidable park ever used in Europe. The clear-visioned prophetess had instinctively appreciated the powers of this mighty arm, in general so disregarded by the rude warlike science of the age. The ingenuity and skill of John of Lorraine ably seconded her sagacious purposes; and the French perhaps owe their fondness and superiority in the science of destruction at a distance to the genius and shrinking eyes of a female warrior.

A strangely mingled emotion was in the heart of the Maid when she leaped once more into the saddle of her war-steed, and went with the rest of the captains to take farewell of the king, at the head of the departing host. There were unutterable regret and warlike joy,—a ravening anguish at the thought of no longer beholding him,—satisfaction that he remained in safety,—a vague but burning desire to show by deeds how much more worthy of her king's esteem she was than those whose courtly accomplishments absorbed his admiration. She longed to be away from the spectacles continually offered by the coquetry and passion of the prince and Agnes Sorel, which excited a continual wrath and sadness in her bosom—wherefore she herself knew not. To accomplish the objects of her mission, reinstate the king, and depart for ever, were now become equal objects of hope and resolve with Jeanne d'Arc.

Charles had yielded, with his natural easiness, to the arguments of La Trimouille, who would not suffer him to hazard his person in the field, and who persuaded him that with his army he would be in

danger of any design that might be formed to restore the constable to power. But instead of feeling the kind of shame which a young prince of more energetic character might have felt in this reversal of the rights and duties of the sexes, he only made a laughing observation to Jeanne, when they parted, that as he had lent her his sword, she ought to leave him her distaff. The Lady of Beauty laughed and said, she would teach him how to amuse himself instead, with embroidering a tapestry she meant to work, of Hercules spinning to amuse Dejanira.

Thus lightly on one side—but with what conflicting and tumultuous thoughts on the other—parted the warlike prophetess and the king for whom she proceeded to face danger and death!

The army advanced, in the first instance, on the town of Jargeau, whither Suffolk had retired with a large fraction of the defeated host of Orleans. Almost from the moment they lost sight of the tower of Loches, and of the streaming kerchief of the Lady of Beauty, the duke of Alençon commenced the prosecution of a plan he had secretly formed with many principal captains of his army. Alençon was handsome, royal, and sprightly—he had encountered little but success in matters of a personal nature, hitherto, and he now laboured with singular diligence to insinuate himself into the familiarity and favour of the simple country girl of Domremy. But the warmer and kinder he waxed, the colder and sterner she became—the more reserved and lofty of demeanour, until at length even the vanity of Alençon discerned that he was moving on a hopeless tack. Meanwhile, with almost equal ill success, the duke, and others in the secret, commenced an unceasing series of complaints and upbraidings against La Trimouille and his policy. Save that the Maid seemed a little surprised to hear that the very same men, whose tongues were apparently given merely to flatter him, could now find no revilings sufficiently depreciative to speak of the minister, she took no notice of what was said. Or, being much pressed and queried, she would answer that she came into France to fight the king's enemies, and not to judge his friends.

In this manner, the army of Alençon approached Jargeau; but the French soldiery, confiding absolutely in the fortunes of their inspired leader, neglected all common precautions. An advanced guard, rashly pushing on, was met in the suburbs of the city by the earl of Suffolk's brother, Alexander de la Pole, and driven back, in great confusion, on the main body. Yet the mere appearance of Jeanne, with her standard, sent them back to the conflict with such frenzied impetus, that the English were in turn compelled to take refuge in their walls.

The siege of Jargeau was regularly formed, and for the first time Jeanne witnessed the full powers of John of Lorraine's art. Friends and foes stood alike aghast and amazed at the prodigious results of his efforts. In as few days as most men had expected weeks to elapse, a breach was effected. A great tower and huge mass of rampart rolled down; and without demanding any counsel but her own will, Jeanne ordered the trumpets instantly to summon the army to a general assault, while she herself led one into the breach.

The duke of Alençon was of a rash and confident temper, but he,

too, was alarmed at the audacity of such an attempt, and disposed from pique to dispute Jeanne's wish. He represented the greater number of the English garrison, and the responsibility that attached to him on a failure. "We shall not fail, fair duke!" replied Jeanne, haughtily. "What should we fear? It is not thou, nor I, who conduct the conflict, but the Almighty One above! If I thought not so, I would much rather be minding my sheep, than amidst these horrors and perils!"

"But it is not a good time for an assault; it is noonday, and the sun glows too hotly. Dunois himself would be glad to breathe awhile out of his helmet!" returned the duke.

"It is always time when it pleases God, which is now; for look how palely and fearfully the English stare at us from the ruins," returned Jeanne. "Forward, fair duke, to the assault! Or dost thou fear? Hearken; I promise, faithfully, to bring thee back safe and sound to thy wife—whom thou shouldst love better than to call Jeanne 'sweetheart,' or to gaze so doatingly askew on the Lady of Beauty! I will take thee to her in as good or better an estate than I now see thee; and to prove it, draw back now, or thou art but dead!"

"What ails me, that I should flee my post like a runagate?" returned the duke, without stirring a foot.

"Dost thou mark yonder bombard? It hath thee very fairly in its eye, duke, and the English cannoneer is lighting his match," replied Jeanne.

"In sooth, it eyes me as lovingly as even thou fanciest I eyed the Lady of Beauty!" said Alençon, laughing and stepping aside.

"I will stand in your very footprints, my lord, for an hour, to spoil a prophecy!" said a knight belonging to the Marshal de Raix, who well knew his lordship's aversion to Jeanne d'Arc. He stepped lightly forward, and almost at the same instant his head was struck from his shoulders by a cannon-ball.

"Forward! to the assault! Jeanne is the only prophetess!" shouted Alençon, raising his battle-axe; and the assault commenced. Jeanne insisted on leading the storming party with Alençon and Dunois, and she was the first to set her ladder in the ditch and essay to mount the shattered wall. She bore her standard aloft—a circumstance which possibly saved her life. A huge stone, dashed down among the assailants, struck on its pole and turned aside the full violence of a blow that, nevertheless, alighted on her casque, and hurled her into the ditch. The assailants paused in consternation, but she arose again, almost as instantly. "Upon them; upon them, friends!" she shouted, as if raised by divine power with increased energies. "God has condemned the invaders! Courage, courage! from this instant they are ours!"

The English, who had hitherto defended themselves with great courage and obstinacy, lost heart on these words, and at the wonderful fury of the assault that followed. They resisted but a brief period, and the French, entering the town, made a bloody massacre of all they found, excepting some few prisoners, among whom was the earl of Suffolk. His brother was slain, and nearly a thousand English

shared the same disastrous doom. It seemed now a settled thing, on both sides, that neither should expect nor offer quarter.

From Jargeau the victorious French proceeded to lay siege to Beaugency. But the terror of the sorceress had preceded her, and the numerous garrison abandoned the town, and retired into the castle, almost as soon as she appeared. Thence they sent the most earnest entreaties to Talbot, who had become chief commander of the English forces by Suffolk's imprisonment, to come to their relief. The activity of that renowned captain, and the private intimations sent by the leaders in Beaugency of the panic-struck state of their troops, made it certain that no time would be lost in this attempt; and yet, when the messenger was seized and his despatches taken from him, Jeanne ordered them to be restored, and himself to be set at liberty to proceed. "I desire to see Talbot again," she said, laughingly. "Let him come to Beaugency, and we will beat all the garrisons of the Loire assembled in battle array, which will spare us the trouble of going from town to town to seek for them."

The duke of Alençon suddenly withdrew his objections, and consented to the arrangement. He even purposely protracted the siege, declaring that they could take the castle of Beaugency whenever they pleased, and that meanwhile it ought to be left untaken, as a lure for Talbot. Nor was it until it was certainly known in the camp before Beaugency that Talbot had collected an army and was advancing to its relief, that he ventured on a plan, privately devised among the enemies of La Trimouille, for the restoration of the constable to authority.

On a concerted occasion, the duke presented himself, with a face of great grief and dismay, to Jeanne, and informed her that they must instantly raise the siege of the castle of Beaugency, and retire from the approach of Talbot. Jeanne calmly inquired wherefore, in the tone of one whose mind is so firmly made upon a point, that he is willing to hear any reasons to the contrary, certain that his opinion cannot be changed. Without replying directly, the crafty duke launched into a bitter invective against La Trimouille, whose personal jealousies and hatreds, he said, would undo all the good that had been done. And after laying a sufficient groundwork of this sort, the duke proceeded to declare, that he had been obliged to plight himself solemnly not to suffer the constable De Richemont to join the armies of the king, or enter his presence. Nevertheless, he was now approaching with twelve hundred combatants, comprising most of the best lances of France, humbly to offer his allegiance and services to the king, and aid in doing battle against his enemies. Alençon protested that he dared not await his arrival, and consequently that they must retire from Beaugency, and abandon all hope of fighting Talbot.

And now it was for the first time that the indignation of the Maid seemed roused against the minister, who, she was yet aware, distrusted and thwarted all her enterprises. "All Frenchmen have the right of dying for France—all children for their mother—say nay who will!" she exclaimed. "Fly if thou wilt, Alençon, thus basely and

cowardly; I will not stir a foot from Beaugency, unless to meet Talbot."

This was exactly as the duke desired it. "Then must I tarry, too! All my captains will witness that I have no power in the host to stir them against aught the Maid determines!" he exclaimed, joyfully. "If the constable comes, it is no fault of mine; we must take the castle for certain if we would secure this passage of the Loire; and if the constable joins his battle to ours, and fights on the side of France instead of Talbot, we shall appear to all mankind madmen to try and hinder him. But yet I dare not consent to remain unless thou, Jeanne,—thou to whom the saints have given the fate of France,—determine that we shall stay and receive De Richemont like a brother who has angered his sire in wrath, and returns to crave pity and forgiveness."

"Yea, he hath eaten the husks of exile long enough. Let him return and merit the pardon we will all entreat for him, by some noble service!" said Jeanne, whose pastoral and filial reminiscences environed this suggestion with the most affecting associations. "We will go out and meet him with open arms—not like the envious and grudging brother that bemoaned his brother's return to peace and plenty!"

Accordingly the chiefs of the army before Beaugency, and in fact nearly the whole host, went forth to meet the constable and his Bretons on their arrival. Fraternal embraces, shouts, tears, and the wildest effusions of joy, mingled the two lines of soldiery long before their captains met. Nevertheless, the disgraced constable had continued his advance to the very moment of the greeting, in doubt whether his friends or enemies prevailed, and whether he should be received with blows or embraces.

The stern, spare figure of the constable, sheathed in steel from head to foot, with vizor raised, revealing his severe and portentous countenance, came in sight somewhat in the rear of these demonstrations. The nobles and captains, who had intrigued so laboriously to bring him thither, were all present, but the constable and Jeanne d'Arc, from the first instant, noticed only each other. Both alighted, and advanced with a slow step and earnest observation until they met. "Ah, noble constable, thou art not come hither by my will," she said, extending her hand. "But since thou art come to battle the enemies of France, thou art welcome!"

"Jeanne, I am glad to see thee," replied the constable drily, and pausing ere he returned her grasp. "Yet I was in truth strangely surprised to hear they had given the powers of mine office to a woman though nothing done by the mad ape who misguides the realm might to make men wonder. As to whether thou art of God, as some report, or not, I trouble myself little. If of God, I fear thee in nothing, for God knows my good will; if of the devil, I fear thee less."

"Good is good, whether it blows from east or west!" exclaimed Hire. "Answer not, brave Jeanne, but hear news that makes all mothers who call Frenchwomen mothers, and which I reserved as a

sweetmeat for any bitterness! Talbot is coming—Talbot, with all his English hounds at his heels, gathered far and near—so we have our cherries in the basket, and have but to fall to work with a good appetite."

"It is time to take Beaugency, then," replied Jeanne, quietly. "And in honour of our guest, let us look on and see how the constable takes towns, and if his methods be better than ours, we will follow them henceforth."

The constable smiled, and the gloomy fierceness of his countenance relaxed as he pressed Jeanne's hand in his hard grasp, and replied, "I accept the party, as one of great pleasaunce, if Alençon yields it me. And I think it will be long before I shall see occasion to repent the name of friend, which from this hour I give thee. Thou art honest, Jeanne, but the perfidious counsellors whom I slew (De Giac I hung and threw into the Loire, Beaulieu I struck through his false heart with my dagger beneath the betrayed king's eyes) were traitors—all!"

After more general and joyful greetings with his friends, the constable proceeded to make his arrangements for a brisk assault with his own men on the castle of Beaugency. But the discouragement and alarm of the besieged became so complete when they found that the Bretons had arrived, that their commanders requested terms of composition. Jeanne was always eager to spare the effusion of blood; and the French generals, knowing that Talbot was on his march, thought it best to reserve their strength to abide his shock. Beaugency was allowed to capitulate, and a large corps of those dejected warriors, who had conquered France under Henry V., were permitted to leave the castle with their horses and harness, in disgraceful safety!

On the following day the united French hosts, now swelled to formidable numbers and flushed with hope and victory, set out from Beaugency to meet Talbot. It was hoped that he had advanced too far to retire, even when he found his purpose of relieving Beaugency forestalled; and so confident were the French they had taken the right direction to meet him, that the vanguard threw out no scouts, but continued to press unwariedly forward. It was led by Jeanne, the constable, and nearly all the other principal commanders. But when a considerable tract of country had been crossed, and no signs of the English host appeared, the duke of Alençon proposed to halt and send forth intelligencers to ascertain their exact position. "It needs not! Advance, in the name of God, and if they be hung in the skies we shall have them, for He has ordained their punishment by our swords," exclaimed Jeanne. "Let us on, and my heart tells me that on this day our gentle king shall have the greatest victory that ever alighted, like a plumed eagle, on the crest of France!"

"Brave wench! but that I am already wived, I would wed thee to make me father of heroes!" said the constable, delightedly.

"But I am not, my lord, and am of good birth, and will win my spurs to-day, and will make Jeanne my wife when this field is won, if

she will let me!" said one of the constable's favourite squires, called De Flavy, a coarse and brutal but very valiant soldier.

"What say you, Jeanne? I could be well pleased to make a Breton woman of thee, and dower thee with a richer fief than ever La Trimouille's greediness will suffer the king to grant!" said De Richemont, with great eagerness.

"I fight not for rewards that either kings or counts can give, and deem a husband one, least of all," replied Jeanne, with a smile of disdain. "Good esquire, rest satisfied, you are too noble of blood and breeding for a shepherd girl's alliance, and renew not your proffer if you would not have me answer it in rougher guise."

The captains all laughed heartily, but the refusal, and the ironical terms in which it was conveyed, sank like a corroding iron into the mean soul of Guillaume de Flavy.

"Comfort thyself, she has also scorned me, De Flavy," said the duke of Alençon, but not altogether with the careless vivacity he assumed. "It is true I never openly offered even my love, which is all that the priests have left me to dispose of; but Jeanne knows my heart, and despises its adoration."

He looked inquiringly and very earnestly at the Maid as he spoke, who, with a tranquil contempt that filled him with a secret but violent indignation, merely replied, "Ye choose an ill time for your wooing, messires, in the face of battle and death. Reserve these fond speeches for your wives and lady-loves, and let us see which of ye will best deserve to have his folly forgotten, by giving us nobler cause to remember him!"

The vanguard continued its advance to within about a league of a large village called Pataye, without discovering the English enemy. Nevertheless, Talbot and all his army were within a short distance of that fated spot.

The captivity of the earl of Suffolk had released Talbot from the trammels in which he was kept by the colder and more cautious policy of that general. He had become, by the event, commander-in-chief of the English army on the Loire, and instantly set to work to repair what he considered the errors of his predecessor, by a contrary procedure. Perceiving that the scattered English garrisons would be devoured in detail as they had been at Orleans, he drew out the principal strength of all the towns on the Loire, assembled them in an army, and resolved to march with them to offer battle and relieve Beaugency. It was only the delay of Fastolfe in joining him with a large body, which he now commanded at Meun, that retarded the operation so long as to permit the junction of the constable with the duke of Alençon.

Fastolfe had received the most earnest entreaties and commands from the duke of Bedford to waive all complaints with Talbot as to the manner in which he had been treated at Orleans, and advance to his aid. The English power in France had sustained a shock at Orleans which made it even tremble in Paris and in Normandy. Only the glory of some great success could check the ruin which this cir-

cumstance announced, and the cautious Bedford himself declared that everything must be hazarded to effect the object.

For awhile Fastolfe had not unreasonably answered the summons of his new chief, by reproaching him with the desertion he had suffered in St. Loup. But to the duke of Bedford he alleged the dejected and heartless condition of the troops which had gathered round him, as a reason for not moving from his quarters. They were indeed composed in great part of the fugitives from Orleans, still in the full terror of defeat, and apprehensions of the supernatural attributes of their overthrower. An instinctive sympathy collected these men in the garrison of Meun around Fastolfe. They felt that he had as little reason as any of them to venture again in the sorceress's destroying path.

It may well be imagined that the triumphs of Jeanne d'Arc had in no wise diminished Fastolfe's belief in her having sold herself to the fiend. All that a mortal and a valiant soldier could do, all that desperation could dare, he felt he had done and dared to withstand her resistless progress at Orleans. Nothing but shame and destruction, he was convinced, awaited all who opposed her. Towns and fortresses, which under ordinary circumstances ought to have stopped armies for months, yielded when she but summoned them. The destroying angel could scarcely have wrought a more rapid and relentless slaughter. The glory he had acquired, and which he was passionately desirous of preserving, made Fastolfe still more unwilling to hazard it on a die loaded by fate against the side he played on. Notwithstanding the entreaties and commands of Talbot, and the arrival of fresh troops from Paris, which the regent sent him to infuse spirits into his defeated bands, Fastolfe stirred not.

In addition to the feelings and apprehensions he shared in common with the entire English host, the Dragon Knight was secretly haunted by the idea that his state of excommunication exposed both himself and his friends to a hideous danger. He who perished thus, perished eternally: the Church herself could not revoke the consequences of her curse, if the victim left the earth beneath it! Not only the death of this life, but an eternal one, was before him, which the horrible fancies of the middle ages surrounded with incalculable suffering and fear. Accordingly he remained immovable in Meun, until finally, Talbot himself, attended by his army, advanced to that city to claim his aid in person, or perhaps to enforce it.

This was a measure which Fastolfe had very little desired or expected from so haughty a commander; and he received the new general-in-chief, with few marks of cordiality, into his city. Still the deepest indignation and grief swelled in his heart when he heard the tidings Talbot's host brought with it. It was not yet known that the castle of Beaugency had fallen; but the massacre at Jargeau, and the vehement entreaties of the captains in the former place, that their countrymen would redeem them from a like fate, wrung the soul of Fastolfe.

The despairing sentiments in it were, however, yet too strong, and he represented to Talbot and his captains the extreme dejection of

the English troops, in contrast with the joyful enthusiasm of the French. He urged the fewness of their numbers, which the least movement in advance would thin, as the jolting of the car shakes the ears from the corn. In conclusion, he advised that the English in Beaugency should make the best terms they could for themselves, and the rest retire to their garrisons to await better times and hopes, and reinforcements from England.

"What! abandon my valiant soldiers at Beaugency to the French, who promise mercy, and cut the throats of their unarmed prisoners!" shouted Talbot. "Commence my fields by a flight, my captainship by desertion! Repeat, on a grander scale, the errors I blamed in Suffolk and Gladesdale! Fastolfe, it is thy own heart that trembles, and not those of your soldiery! The meanest of them would rather die many deaths than abandon his comrades in such extremity!"

"Take thy lance and sword, Talbot, if thou art not the coward thou callest me, and I will prove that I am none, or thou shalt slay me!" returned Fastolfe, furiously roused.

"Yes, Fastolfe! take thy sword and lance, as I will mine, and we will prove—not who deserves so vile a name, which never yet passed Talbot's lips with thine,—but which has the best right to lead the soldiers of Henry V., not upon each other, but into the ranks of the French renegades!" said Talbot; and Fastolfe, who expected a far different conclusion, was moved even to tears.

"None is fitter for the office than the noble Talbot! I dispute it not—nay, I will die to prove it!" he said, with strong emotion. "But what can man against fiends?"

"Cross himself, charge, and win!" returned Talbot, suddenly clasping Fastolfe in a warrior's embrace. "Let us on; and I swear by the tomb of Henry of Agincourt, that whichever of us proves himself the better knight, shall henceforth lead all the rest!"

Fastolfe was carried away by a tide of natural feeling, which triumphed for awhile over every obstacle, and cordially returning the embrace of Talbot, he echoed his cry, and "Let us on!" became the word throughout the English host.

CHAPTER XX.

PATAYE.

"Strife of gloomy Uthorno, why should I mark thy wounds?
Thou art with the years that are gone; thou fadest on my soul!"—*Ossian.*

Talbot, Fastolfe, the Lord Scales, and Sir Thomas Rampstone, were the leaders under whose guidance the English army advanced towards the fatal field of Pataye. The fall of Beaugency was not yet announced, and they expected to find the French beneath the walls of the castle. The army advanced, in order of battle, over a vast flowery plain, enamelled with all the profuse mosaic-work of summer, without disco-

vering the least sign of an enemy, and without seeking any, so assured were the captains that Beaugency still held out. But suddenly a solitary pursuivant-at-arms appeared, pricking his horse in great haste towards the approaching banners. On arriving, he proved to be a messenger, who announced the surrender of the town and castle of Beaugency, and the departure of the garrison, which, at no great distance, had changed into a panic, dispersion, and flight.

Fastolfe, who had relapsed into his gloomy musings, now earnestly renewed his advice that the army should retire to its garrisons, since the object to be attained by an advance was lost. But Talbot more obstinately and furiously refused. "Never will I fly before a woman!" he exclaimed. "And our towns are but lost, either way, if we win not some good field against her. Desert me if thou wilt, Sir John! and with only my own men, and such as for very shame will not follow thee, I will advance, and with the aid of God and my Lord St. George, battle and discomfit them!"

"Thou shalt be well assured of me, Lord Talbot; I will lead the van!" returned Fastolfe. "Keep thou but the main battle up with me, and methinks I cannot fly."

He said this haughtily and angrily, yet with pale and tremulous lips; and goring his spurs with a sudden and uncalled-for stroke in the flanks of his charger, he rode moodily on.

Wulfstan of Warbois was, as usual, the close attendant on his lord's person, and did not venture to interrupt the melancholy silence which had of late become habitual to him. He grew a little surprised and alarmed, however, at last, on observing the ashy paleness of his master's complexion, and the incessant mutter of prayer on his lips, even while continuing the advance so rapidly that few of the men-at-arms could keep pace.

The verdurer's own deep apprehensions were rekindled by these signs of alarm in so valiant a leader, and he presumed, at length, in a faltering voice, to inquire by what signs his lord seemed so well assured their enemy was a sorceress? Fastolfe made no reply, for at the moment a singular incident occurred. A stag started from a lair in the thick grass before them, and fled from their approach. With that species of wild gaiety that visits men at times in desperate moods, Fastolfe instantly raised a view-halloo, and spurred on his charger, as if to chase it in the heavy panoply of war.

Wulfstan's professional instinct was immediately on the alert, and he raised a gladsome cheer that made the welkin ring, and was caught up by the scattered parties advancing over the plain. A sprightly chase seemed likely to diversify the march of the vanguard; the stag flew forward, and all followed with joyous shouts, when suddenly, as if raised by the stroke of a magician from the plain, the horizon became crowded with banners, and the French host appeared advancing in a vast gleaming line. The surprise had at all events the effect of some such marvel on Fastolfe and his men, who were not aware that a low mountainous swell in the plain had concealed the approach of the French so far. But being apprized of their enemies' nearness by their cries after the stag, the French vanguard, under

La Hire, rolled impetuously forward to gain the advantage of the eminence. The stag disappeared from the astonished gaze of the English, and men and steeds halted in confused masses. There wanted little to complete the dismay of all, and that little was supplied by the verdurer. "Now am I certain she is a witch, and know how she has fastened us!" he exclaimed. "It is the stag of Commercy! I saw the yellow gold of my lord's chain round its neck!"

Fastolfe stared at him motionlessly,—and after a pause of dismal meditation gave orders to the vanguard to retire. This manœuvre was about to be executed with unusual promptitude when Talbot arrived at the speed of his horse, with the Lord Scales and Sir Thomas Rampstone in his company. "Halt!—who dared speak of turning back on these French rascallions?" he said, with a fierce glance at Fastolfe.

"They are not rascallions, but the best chivalry of France! Yonder are the banners of Dunois and the constable!—to advance is madness!" replied Fastolfe. "We are but a handful against an armful; they have the 'vantage of the ground; a defeat were ruin to us, for it will lose all in an hour that the dead king conquered in France, with such infinite toil, and in so long a time!"

"They are many, it may not be denied," returned Talbot. "But I was with Henry V. at Agincourt; my fathers were with his at Crecy and Poictiers! I see not that there are more French here than David Gam saw at Agincourt;—'enow to fight, enow to be slain, and enow to run away!' Your numbers were not more equal at the battle of Herrings, Fastolfe! yet you won it."

"Yea, but we fought then against mortals!" said the Dragon Knight, shuddering. "Now we battle with a witch who can make darkness at noonday!"

"Thou ravest, Fastolfe, like an old woman in her dotage, to a grandchild!" said Talbot, laughing scornfully. "Is it darkness now, or doth the blessed sun show his bright face in the skies, and wink merrily at us if we raise our eyes to him?"

"And thou ravest, Talbot, like the atheist and unbeliever men call thee!" retorted Fastolfe, vehemently.

"It is better, methinks, to be of no belief than of one that makes a coward of a valiant man; for coward I will call thee before all the chivalry of the garter thou wearest, if thou fleest now from a woman's sword!" shouted Talbot.

"I have seen her at her sorceries, I tell thee, Talbot," said Fastolfe, without any flash of the indignation to be expected from this speech. "I have seen her! Let us bide until her time is up, for until then may no man strive with her but to his own destruction! Eternal destruction, O God! for me."

"And I have seen her at her sorceries, which were only in the eyes and fears of fools and dastards!—The friend of Bedford, the victor of Rouvrai, is neither," said Talbot. "Remind thee, man! At Rouvrai thou didst never pause to count thy living enemies, and the dead outnumbered those who slew them. But be it as it may,—come all earth, and Heaven, and hell!—Talbot will not budge from this field

until he has disputed every inch with a drop of blood. I will tarry here with the vanguard until ye come to my aid in this manner: Scales and Rampstone with the main battle, on my right; Fastolfe and the rear-guard on my left—to guard my heart, dear brother, for well I know thou art the most trustworthy soldier here! What, give us thy Rouvrai look again! and thou shalt see in the ordonnance of my battle, how well I remember our master's lessons at Agincourt. Between these hedges, with mine archers, I will stop the march of all France, until Rampstone and Scales turn them round the base of the valley, and thy victorious standards glitter among the chestnuts in yonder village of Pataye! Then will we all charge at once, and God and St. George shall give the victory!"

The glorious recollections roused by these words stirred the valiant but darkly shadowed nature of Fastolfe to something of its early vigour. He accepted the office assigned to him, and in a brief council, the battle was formally planned. It was agreed that Talbot and the vanguard should remain in face of the enemy, and fortify themselves by taking possession of some enclosed fields and vineyards, while Rampstone and Scales assailed the enemy on the right, and Fastolfe advanced to the village of Pataye. The French would then be in danger of being surrounded on their mountain, and must make the attack; in sustaining which, the superiority of the English archery gave great advantages that almost always resulted in victory.

These dispositions made, the captains proceeded to execute them, while Talbot advanced with characteristic impetuosity, and took possession of the ground he had assigned himself. Regardless of the circumstance that he placed his troops in imminent danger of being attacked before aid could arrive, he pushed them to the very base of the French position. His flanks were indeed defended by a row of vineyard hedges, and, in front, his archers planted the stockade, behind which they usually discharged their artillery. But the isolated line of his defences was not unnoticed by one French leader at least, whose genius equalled her courage. From the heights of Pataye, the Maid of Orleans looked down on the English advance, and musingly watched the development of the plans of her enemies. There was something so extraordinary and rapt in her appearance at this time, that the French leaders, who were eagerly discussing what was best to be done, continually referred their plans to her with their eyes, as if expecting some oracle.

They were interrupted by the arrival of two heralds, sent by Lord Talbot, to deliver a defiance. "What says Talbot?" inquired the Maid, awakening from her reverie as if from a dream.

"Thus," replied the herald, Clarence. "'We are three English knights, who will fight ye of France in any number that dare descend your mountain and battle with us!'"

"We are coming," replied Jeanne, "but cannot bide until Scales and Fastolfe are abreast with Talbot; therefore tarry with us, heralds, to count your English slain, and tell us the names of note, for ye will not have time to return. The herald, Orleans, that shall be Rheims, will make ye welcome, though ye would have slain him in St. Loup—

where an angel, disguised as an English archer, loosened his chain, and gave him the means to scatter fire among ye, while he himself came scatheless from the flames!"

"Why, what is now to be done, Jeanne?" said the duke of Alençon.

"Have ye all good spurs?" returned the Maid.

"What say you? Are we to turn our backs?" said the constable, sternly.

"Nay; but certain of the English shall be vanquished without struggle, and ye will need sharp spurs to ride after them, for this field must be one of destruction!" replied Jeanne, with a mournful glance over the plain. "I see it covered with heaps of the slain as the mower heaps his harvest! Let us forward at once, ere yonder vulture of battle, Talbot, unclogs his wings and spreads them to his bloody beak."

"That were unknightly and unchivalrous, Jeanne," said Dunois. "We are challenged to battle with three knights, and only one is in presence."

"The fate of France is in mine hand; were only mine own, I might stand upon this scruple," replied Jeanne. "I am the captain of France, noble Dunois; thou art only its bravest knight."

"And what, I pray thee, is the constable?" said De Richemont, in an offended and haughty tone. "I claim the ordonnance of this battle by right of my staff of office, and neither man nor woman shell rend it from me!"

"Order the battle who will, I will win it, and now is the moment!" said Jeanne, with a glittering look of inspiration; and pushing on her charger, she rode to the front of the line of battle so as to be distinctly seen by all the masses of the army. Then unsheathing her sword and raising its polished blade to the extent of her arm over her head until it glared in the sun like a sharp flame, she pronounced a very brief but inspiring harangue. "Soldiers!—Frenchmen!" she exclaimed, "behold this sun! Ere it sets, we shall redeem France. Charge with me, and this field is ours! God who made life, made death too; therefore fear it not, for He is with ye, and those who perish are only those He has summoned to eternal life! Remember your king, your wives, your children, yourselves, and Orleans, and charge with me and clear the field!"

A terrific shout of joy responded, and the instant the Maid's standard began to advance, the whole host poured impetuously after it; leaders and soldiers were alike seized with frantic enthusiasm, and Talbot himself was amazed at the fury of the attack which assailed his front.

There was one advantage in the dangerous position Talbot had chosen, perhaps not undesignedly,—his soldiers themselves saw that it would be impossible to attempt to retire from it. They were besides the best and bravest of the English troops, and their leader's character rendered disobedience to him as dangerous as the sword of the enemy. Accordingly, they defended themselves with a courage and obstinacy that baffled all the fury of the French. The attack, repulsed many times in front, spread out broadly on each side, and soon

the advancing masses of the English wings began to appear on each side, and restored the balance of the conflict.

Jeanne had hoped to prevail in the way which had now become habitual to her, by the fury of a first charge. But adapting herself with the tranquillity of a veteran general to the change of circumstances, and commanding all as if she alone had the right, she bade the constable renew the attack on Talbot in the centre, while Dunois repulsed the English right wing, and she herself marched against their left, which was verging with unexpected rapidity on the village of Pataye. These measures were instantly adopted, and the Maid advanced on the side at which Fastolfe was now vigorously pushing on with the rearguard.

Thus far, the attack on Talbot had so intermingled the hosts, that no opportunity was allowed for the use of the powerful French artillery. But now Jeanne ordered the cannoneers to precede her advance, which they were enabled to do by a novel plan of John of Lorraine, who slided his artillery forward on grooves.

For the first time on a field of battle had so dreadful a thunder of ordnance been heard! It seemed as if the Maid heralded her approach with a tempest of fire and uproar surpassing aught ever before heard by human sense. For awhile, both hosts paused in horror and amazement—and then both believed that supernatural assistance was afforded to the Maid, and that her exterminating advance must decide the field! Until now, Fastolfe had apparently resumed all his old valorous qualities, as a leader and a knight. He headed the steady march of his division, into which his altered demeanour and exhortations infused their former hopefulness and audacity. His foremost standards were entering the village of Pataye, and the French right was apparently turned, when all hell seemed to advance, raging with flames and smoke and stunning noise, on his flank. Fastolfe and his soldiery alike paused in confusion and dismay.

To push forward with the greatest rapidity, meet and overthrow their enemies, would in former times have been the first thought of an English captain and soldiery, in such a conjuncture. But it was not so with them now. They halted, and the whole mass seemed to await the devouring progress of their enemies in stupified amazement. Fastolfe gazed with distended eyes before him, and there was distraction in their glare! Numbers fell around him, and he himself was splashed all over with the blood of one who was slain beside him. A tremendous rush of inconceivable and terrific thoughts filled his brain. He gave no orders, made no movement, but glared forward like one who expects to behold some insupportable presence of horror—some visual form of death! Nearer and nearer came the destroying tempest of battle: fiends of ragged fire seemed to toss red-hot balls against the English host in every direction. Suddenly came a rush of wind, and rolled away the black cloud of the artillery, and the gleaming lines of the French were visible, compassing them all around! Foremost of these was the sorceress with her fatal standard!—and Fastolfe saw no more. Every consideration of honour, shame, and duty, vanished from his mind, and only a tremendous phantom of

terror remained—from which he fled! The famous pupil of Henry V. —the victor of Rouvrai, turned his charger's head, clapped spurs to his horse, and fled! "All is lost!—fly, fly!" were his words, and at the utmost speed of his noble war-horse, unwont to such achievements, Fastolfe openly and disgracefully fled!

This example was but too readily followed: the entire masses of the left wing broke their ranks, threw down their arms, and took to flight. But the panic stopped not there. The English right, which was making a steady advance, and almost close on the ranks of Dunois, perceiving what had happened, were seized with a similar frenzy. At the moment when Dunois imagined that a fearful shock awaited him, he beheld his antagonists pause, waver, turn their backs, and flee! It may be conjectured if they lacked pursuers.

The reserve, or rear-battle, as it was called, in its turn, awaited not the junction of the fugitive wings,—which on this occasion so well deserved their metaphorical title. In the briefest possible period, the field of battle was but one scene of flight and unresisted slaughter, save in the centre, where Talbot and his bands were enclosed. And now the Maid, satisfied with the dispersion of Fastolfe's troops, turned her cannonade on his position, and levelled the hedges, while on every other side he was assailed by the victorious French. Still the English resisted with the courage of despair, and the battle at this point became a dismal massacre. Of the whole central mass, scarcely a score survived this terrific day! Talbot himself was hurled senseless to the ground beneath the shock of a score of lances, dashed all at once on his breast. This event completed the discomfiture of his men, who turned all their attention to endeavours to escape from the gory scene. But in vain. The merciless artillery of John of Lorraine showered death among them: swords and axes, and clubs and lances, brained and pierced them in every direction. Every outlet was guarded, and the whole plain was covered with horsemen, who slaughtered every living thing that wore the colours of England. The victorious French listened to no entreaties, even of their best-beloved leaders. Jeanne herself implored them, with tears, to show mercy to all who no longer resisted, in vain. The frenzy of blood was in every soul, and none were spared that could be reached! So dreadful a slaughter was scarcely ever witnessed; for, on this field of battle, nearly four-fifths of one host perished, while of the other only as many scores adorned the trophies of death!

It was with the greatest difficulty, and at the hazard even of his own life, that Dunois saved Talbot from the fury of the soldiers. Jeanne d'Arc was of assistance in this humane effort, for when she reached the place where he had been made prisoner, she struck to the ground with her own lance the foremost of a ferocious band who surrounded Dunois, and insisted on being allowed to beat the English leader to pieces with their maces. "Slay your own first; for I swear that while I live ye shall not harm one hair of his head!" she exclaimed, and the yelling bands shrunk away like hounds rebuked.

"Talbot, I knew thy place by these crowded dead!" she said, in a very gentle and compassionate tone. "But surely thou seest

now, thou valiant man, that more than mortal power is in this work!"

"A very woman, and neither angel nor devil do I deem thee!" returned Talbot, as fiercely as in his palmiest days. "And therefore,—oh shame eternal, and never to be effaced,—Talbot is defeated by a woman! But it is not so; it is the vile cowardice of Fastolfe that has lost this field! Name what ransom thou wilt, or give me but space to go and proclaim him a coward before all England, and tear his bloodless heart from his breast before the regent's eyes, and I will return to be the mockery of your children like a caged bear, for the remainder of my days!"

"Nay, Talbot, we have thee now, who hast so long and rightfully been called the terror of France, and we will not lightly let thee forth again to ravage!" said the constable. "Mind you when you routed me in Bretagne? for then I swore that, if we met again, we would not soon part, and I must keep my word!"

"Talbot is no prisoner of thine, constable, but of the king, whose banner won this field!" interposed Jeanne. "And I tell thee, knight, that if I have any sway or merit with Charles, thou shalt go free and ransomless the moment thou has seen his gracious eyes, that all the world may know France needs no longer dread the mightiest arms of her foes, and that she conquers no longer by mere human strokes!"

"It were too great a shame to me, Jeanne, to be released, like a worthless varlet, riddance of whose food and watching is ransom enough!" exclaimed Talbot. "If thou meanest me this disgrace, turn me loose among these howling wild beasts that demand my blood, and I shall perish more honourably than of this reproach!"

"Peace! and let him be taken to Loches at once, lest any mischief should befall him here!" returned Jeanne, and turning away with brimful eyes from the spectacle of the degraded and wrathful warrior, she said, musingly, "We have humbled the exalted,—and now to raise the lowly! Henceforth, this little village, unmarked, like mine own Domremy, in the maps of sages, shall be famous for ever for the field fought here and won by the Maid of Orleans! Yea, and by the bright memory of the day, the 18th of June shall be for ever fortunate to France!"

The Maiden prophesied not truly there, since it was on the anniversary of the battle of Pataye that the stupendous Waterloo was lost by France.

The French generals were mostly but little pleased with the tone of mastery assumed by Jeanne, and with the manner in which she stripped them of the glory of a victory, though to ascribe it to a celestial leader. But they had their own reasons not to offend her, and the duke of Alençon triumphantly announced to her that they had now only to hasten to the king, and attend him on his joyful coronation to Rheims. No enemy remained that could contest the war with them, and the slaughter of Pataye had exterminated the forces that might have molested their communications with the south on the march. Jeanne seized on the idea with eagerness, and it was resolved that on the following day the whole army should march to Loches, and entreat the king to set forth on the enterprise.

The conspirators now imagined that they had succeeded in enlisting Jeanne in their cause, and should effect their secret purpose of removing and punishing La Trimouille, with ease. But the subtle councillors who governed, in mysterious voicings, the resolutions of Jeanne d'Arc, were busied in a contrary practice. Friar Richard knew that the archbishop of Rheims would have no objection to let the field be won by the aid of the constable; but he also knew that his imperious and overbearing procedures were as distasteful to the prelate as to La Trimouille himself. Nor was the constable likely to suffer any authority which, like that of Jeanne d'Arc, affected an independent movement. For these reasons, an enlightening voice spoke to Jeanne as she lay in her tent that night; and the tidings it brought sent her, without being summoned, to attend the council of the captains which was held while the army mustered at dawn.

"Ha, companions!" she exclaimed as she entered, with a flushed and angry countenance. "How came it ye told me not that the king had sent ye word he would in no wise suffer the constable to approach, but would rather come out and do battle with him,—with us, sweet saints! who live but to do him service! Traitors! your news have compelled him to flee to Bourges, as to a city of refuge against his enemies."

"It is so, and so it shall be, whatever espial has whispered it to you, Jeanne," replied the constable, imperiously, in spite of all the winks and nods of the duke of Alençon. "What I intend to do is for the good of the kingdom, and I will advance, and let me see him who dares to meet me on my way!"

"Not a step, not a single step, shalt thou or any of thy company take towards Bourges against the king's command!" returned Jeanne.

"You are mistaken, Jeanne; these are not the commands of the king, but of the false and cowardly La Trimouille, who fears the just punishment of his perfidy and treasons!" interposed Alençon, in his most winning and blandishing manner.

"It is false; the voices have told me so!" retorted the Maid. "The king hates and fears this constable, and will rather die than put his royal person in his reach. Therefore I will not suffer him to approach by the breadth of a wren's hop."

"Hark ye, then, damsel," exclaimed the marshal de Raix; "we, the captains of the king's host, tell you we would rather have the constable with us than all the maids in France, so tramp it when you will."

"Tramp it I will, but with the king's host, and without its captains, at my heels! They will follow my banner sooner than the proudest among yours. Even your Bretons will with me, constable, and shall, if ye provoke me too far!" said Jeanne.

"She speaks truly," said Alençon, in a low tone, and with difficulty restraining the constable's indignation. "But hear me, Jeanne; grant me but an instant's speech with thee, and if thou hast common as well as uncommon sense, I will convince thee how much wiser it were for thee to go with us than against us! What is La Trimouille

to thee? An envious serpent, who will sacrifice thee the moment his jealousy passes thy service to him! Come with us, and thou mayst well supply his place, and more than supply it, with the king, for thou art a woman, and the king is easily governed by such!—What, thou thinkest that Agnes will bar thy way in that supremacy? Tut, men weary of the rose at times and love to scent the honeysuckle! And I will promise thee that if ever I am at the court, in the power I hope to gain, I will find a fair means to remove Agnes from the king, or her laughing eyes belie her soul!"

"If I thought not that thou didst jest, Alençon, marvellous rogue, I would strike thee with my sword!" exclaimed Jeanne, turning deadly pale and scarlet by turns. "See what thou wilt in the Lady of Beauty—what hast thou seen in the Maid of Orleans to hazard words like these? O, France! thou art again lost! The swords of thy children are again bared against each other! But no; but no, the people follow me, and not ye! Constable, I command you to obey the king's orders, and depart to fight his enemies in Normandy, for with us thou shalt not tarry nor advance! Those who would be forgiven for this mad treason—who would that my lips should never breathe it—follow me!"

"What, all desert me! Is this the aid ye promised, comrades?" said the constable, observing that the captains crowded in consternation towards Jeanne. "Leave this woman, and follow me; what need we of her aid?"

"The soldiery are frenzied, drunk, and intoxicated with her. They will leave us many times ere the Maid once," said Dunois.

"Thou a soldier! thou, who desertest thy comrades, thy battle-brothers, for the sake of a vile dastard that never saw a lance shivered but in a tournament!" shouted De Raix. "But go on thy way; our turn shall come."

"Would it were now in my power," muttered De Flavy, touching the hilt of his dagger unconsciously, but withdrawing his hand when the glance of the maiden fell upon him.

"Strike, good esquire, and see if I was born to die by an assassin's hand!" said Jeanne, scornfully. "One hour I give ye to resolve, and then I march with all that will follow me to Bourges—save the constable and his adherents."

"Let us try the question even now! Let us see if the soldiers of France will not rather follow their proper leader, than a foolish peasant woman!" exclaimed the constable, furiously.

"I am willing," replied Jeanne. "But, constable, look to it; an open disobeyer of the king is, to me, no better than an Englishman—nay, is worse."

The captains crowded round their discomfited leader, and earnestly represented to him the danger, and even impossibility, of executing their purpose against the will of Jeanne. Yielding, at length, to the reasons urged, which were indeed irresistible, but in an agony of grief and indignation, the constable resigned his hopeful project. "Grant me only some angel or devil! that La Trimouille may let her feel his serpent's fang as keenly as I have done, and I

depart, unavenged and unrecompensed, to die in some corner in Bretagne!" he prayed, albeit not much given to the mood.

"Not so, fair constable!" said Jeanne, whose woman's heart was moved with the sorrow she inflicted, and who felt in her soul the impolicy of the measure she executed. "I have seen you serve France like a true and most valiant soldier, and at the king's feet I will entreat your pardon more zealously than mine own. I will bear to him your loyal submission and entreaties, and doubt not to win it, or make myself further need of one."

Alençon, and the other conspirators, eagerly closed with the generous offer, and the unwitting Maid of Orleans thus, in a manner, formally engaged herself among the adversaries of La Trimouille. She, who thought only of the good of France and the union of its severed children, became in his eyes an enemy to his power, and even to his existence.

CHAPTER XXI.

BOURGES.

"By heavenly feet thy paths are trod,—
Undying Love's, who here ascends a throne
To which the steps are mountains; where the god
Is a pervading life and light."—*Byron.*

In the inexperience and grand simplicity of her spirit, Jeanne d'Arc was far from dreaming of the complex effects produced by her attempt to reconcile the constable with the court. The moment the unction of the former with the army of Jeanne d'Arc was known, the king fled as from a host of his most exasperated enemies, and took refuge in the walls of Bourges. Thence he sent De Richemont those positive commands and menaces, which Jeanne d'Arc might have unconsciously disregarded, but that Friar Richard had also intelligencers who dictated the submissive policy she enforced.

The splendours of the exploits of Pataye, the prompt obedience seemingly rendered by the leaders of the victorious army to his injunctions, by no means reconciled La Trimouille to the attempt that had been made. Thenceforth he reckoned Jeanne d' Arc among the innumerable enemies whom his suspicious spirit discerned on all sides, busied in the work of his destruction. He perceived only a more athomless craft in the clear depths of that simplicity which for a moment had beguiled his vigilance. Jeanne d'Arc, returning crowned with a blaze of glory such as few warriors, and no woman, had ever before achieved; the object of idolatrous love and admiration with the French people and soldiery, of unbounded terror and hatred with those of England; was struck with amazement at the reception which awaited her in the court.

It was the first rude contact of her sublime but visionary nature with reality. She was now aware that the enemies of the constable

hated him infinitely more than they loved France, but she had formed no idea that so small a fault could overbalance merits so great, in the estimation of a courtier's self-love and selfishness. Instead of the joyous reception of Loches, increased in splendour and welcome by the superior magnitude of the services conferred, a cold and stately audience only was granted to the triumphant captains.

Jeanne d'Arc, as yet unconscious of the greatness of her crime in having desired to unite all the strength of France in the struggle with its enemies, exaggerated it by making use of the first opportunity to perform her promise to the constable. She pleaded his cause with an eloquence and earnestness which those who had prompted her dared not second, more especially when they observed the blackening looks of La Trimouille. She made a moving picture, such as her own generous and impassioned heart conceived it, of the constable's grief in not being permitted to shed his blood for his prince, or share in the deliverance of his country. She urged his submissive demeanour and loyal intentions with the conviction inspired by her own candour and devotion of spirit; and finally implored his pardon and the unconditional release of the Lord Talbot, as the only rewards she asked for her share in the achievements of Pataye.

Rarely indeed were astonishment and grief struck more suddenly and keenly into a human breast than by the reply which the king made to Jeanne's entreaties. For the first time she beheld that fair and smiling countenance pale with anger and distorted with frowns. "Let Orleans famish again! let Loire mirror only English banners! but if thy mission be to restore the ferocious murderer of Bretagne to his tyrannous sway over us and France, depart and leave us to our fate!" he exclaimed. "Know this, and know it all: we will rather be banished for ever from our realm of France, have not where to lay our heads in safety, or nestle with wild eagles amidst rocks, than be throned in Paris and breathe what dungeon air the constable would prison us in, while he seemed to yield us all the sky!"

"Would ye have brought him hither to rip my heart from my breast as he did that of the Camus de Beaulieu, beneath the king's eyes?" continued La Trimouille, furiously, who, having wedded the widow of De Giac, rarely alluded to the fate of that previous favourite. "False nobles! but the king knows ye all, and so did I, ever; and now this simple country shepherdess turns out to be as false as any of ye."

Alençon and the other captains took the opportunity most earnestly to excuse themselves, while Jeanne stood in silence, as if petrified or thunderstruck. The disapproval or wrath of all mankind would have been as nothing to her compared to her anguish in having provoked her worshipped sovereign to such a degree. She scarcely heeded, and certainly disdained to attempt refuting, the obvious tendency of Alençon's apologies, who threw the blame of what was done upon her, by declaring that Jeanne was the only leader who had any power in the camp, or who could have induced the soldiery to combat bands that came to them as brothers and allies. These, it seems, were the positive instructions with which he departed on the campaign

of the Loire, rather than allow the constable's presence in the army.

La Trimouille felt the policy of affecting to believe these insinuations, and he turned the torrent of his reproaches and invectives on Jeanne d'Arc. The Maid of Orleans heard, with speechless amazement, that she had conspired with the Constable de Richemont to deliver the king into a cruel and insolent captivity, in his hands!

Jeanne d'Arc's impetuous nature now precipitated her into a new error in policy. The instant she could be said really to comprehend that the king himself hated and feared the constable, her own indignation was excited to the highest against him. She irretrievably offended all his partizans by abandoning his cause with as much fervour as she had embraced it. Scarcely articulate with emotion, she declared her ignorance of the noble dauphin's dislike of his constable, and solemnly protested that she would never again suffer his presence in any host in which she carried the banner of France. Then throwing herself at the king's feet, she implored him in the most moving terms that, however angered with her, he would permit her to fulfil the remainder of her mission, in his coronation at Rheims; after which she would retire for ever from his sight to her distant village in the Brie.

Charles made an evasive reply, in which he had been well tutored, and declaring himself satisfied with their excuses, dismissed his victorious leaders with a coldness and disdain that argued a very different state of feeling.

The simple-hearted peasant girl soon discovered, after this scene, that the means she had taken to remove every obstacle from the completion of her mission had raised one that seemed insurmountable. The archbishop of Rheims himself, her fast ally hitherto, rebuked her rashness in undertaking any office to which she was not specially commanded. He informed her that La Trimouille had evidently set himself with determined resolution against the expedition to Rheims. The minister's suspicions were now thoroughly roused, and he believed that if once the person of the king were in the hands of the captains of the army, who were nearly all partisans of the constable, it would be impossible to refuse him his place in it, and his own ruin would follow as a natural consequence. The prelate assured her that their only hope was now to endeavour to remove this apprehension from the favourite's mind, or bring some influence to bear which might finally overcome that wielded to such evil purpose.

Jeanne heard with sorrowful astonishment from lips so sacred this intermingling with human policy in the supernatural office she believed herself created to execute. The prelate himself, on consideration, was alarmed at the shock he had given to her own self-belief, which was so necessary a support to the credulity of the multitude. But it was done, and he could only now apply himself to such remedy as his sagacity could devise.

The arguments by which La Trimouille prevailed with the king were amply seconded by his own love of repose and pleasure, but

were not those alleged by him at the council-board. There, it was the great difficulties and uselessness of the undertaking that La Trimouille constantly urged. The king had already been crowned at Poictiers: what need of a new coronation, unless to make the former one doubtful? The difficulties of the enterprise were apparent. There was no money to pay the army, or provide necessaries for so long a march; all the intervening towns and fortresses—Rheims itself—were in the hands of the enemy. The departure of the army would leave the countries of the Loire exposed to renewed attacks from the English. It was certain that the duke of Bedford was stirring heaven and earth to collect a force in Paris sufficient to repair the disasters sustained by his troops. Their absence would give the traitorous constable time to work any mischief, unless the king preferred yielding himself a prisoner to his tutelage.

The archbishop perceived very clearly, that the instinct which had suggested the coronation at Rheims to the visions of Jeanne d'Arc was in reality the soundest policy. The effect on the popular imagination which it would produce, the dazzling defiance and assertion of divine protection included in so marvellous an achievement, were symbolised to Regnault de Chartres in the longings of her enthusiastic fancy,—in the certain result she announced, that from the moment the king received the sacred oil in Rheims, the designs of his enemies would be for ever frustrated. But how declare these truths to men without imagination, selfish, and timorous to excess? The rest of the objections had a material force which the prelate gradually discerned could only be vanquished by the spiritual agency that had already wrought miracles.

Meanwhile the archbishop and all the other wise and disinterested councillors of the king could not but perceive the necessity of immediate action. This only could obviate some of the objections of La Trimouille. Time was absolutely necessary for the English to assemble any power likely to venture a renewed contest for the Loire. This time might be employed to complete their discouragement, and the revival of France by a coronation to which ages had given the majesty of a divine consecration.

But what chiefly alarmed the archbishop and induced him to resolve on a daring stroke of policy, was the fact, that for the first time the inspired maiden herself showed signs of dejection approaching to despair. If the idolatrous love and veneration of people and soldiery could have consoled her for her bad reception at court, abundance was offered to her. But an utter discouragement seemed to have sunk upon her, the moment she fell under the shadow of the king's displeasure. Her spirit seemed sensitive as that refulgent flower of the sun which folds up all its glories when its magnificent patron withdraws his radiance. The devouring impatience after the realisation of her visions, which had formerly given to her will the rapidity and energy of fire, existed no longer, or only blazed inwardly. She no longer took delight in her warlike exercises, in training the soldiery, or in gazing at their martial sports. All her time was spent in solitude, in prayer, and in tears; for those who saw her, and they were

few, always noted the stains of sorrow on her cheeks, whenever she appeared.

It excited the troubled observation of a priest so well skilled as Regnault de Chartres in the human heart, to mark the strong effect produced by the pettish anger of the young sovereign on a woman of so lofty and powerful a mind. He could well imagine that the ingratitude displayed for such magnificent services might stir her resentment. He could believe, for he saw it plainly, that she was indignant at the protection and support which the Lady of Beauty extended to her, from a feeling how little she ought to have needed either. He thought it probable that a woman who had dared dangers so great in behalf of a man, would begin to despise him for his seeming distate of the intrepid counsels that for the first time called upon him to share peril. But the prelate could not, with all these reasons unitedly, explain to his own satisfaction the depth and abandonment of the grief which possessed the soul of the heroic girl of Domremy.

The archbishop could very well comprehend why Jeanne, though an inmate of the royal palace, never appeared in the court except on those occasions of state when it pleased it to exhibit her. What business had she—now that she no longer urged her glorious purposes—amidst that multitude, jostling each other for power and pelf? Her disdain of all their paltry hopes and fears—her silence and reserved manners—her ignorance of the gaudy and frivolous accomplishments that delight a court, rendered her altogether out of place. Why should she waste on those uncomprehending senses the sublimity and wild eloquence which had roused the unsophisticated populace to do miracles, but only startled and annoyed the courtiers?

The prelate was, however, informed that whenever it was possible to see the king, as she imagined, unobservedly, Jeanne d'Arc would avail herself of the opportunity. She would steal unnoticedly to the chapels when he was at mass, would gaze at him from the battlements of the tower where she was lodged, when he went forth to ride or hunt, and watch him to distances where only a shepherd's eye could have discerned objects. The eloquence she no longer dared to utter before her offended prince, came from her in her solitude like streams of virgin silver from the furnace, uncoined and shapeless, but of the richest metal. The archbishop began even to fear for her reason when he found that she spent much of her time in devising aloud the terms of a speech which was to win her the gentle dauphin's pardon, and his consent to the journey of Rheims.

Other circumstances hastened the resolutions of the friends of Jeanne d'Arc. The captains of the army, seeing all the glory of success ascribed to a woman, and fearful lest the full extent of their conspiracy in behalf of the constable should be revealed by her, were very willing to be rid of her alliance. Some concurred from policy, but the most part from these motives, in La Trimouille's aversion to the enterprise of Rheims. But on the other hand, the soldiers and people were enthusiastically bent on taking it, and awaited with extreme impatience the resolution of their superiors. Rumours began to spread of the unwillingness to comply with the demand of their be-

loved prophetess, and alarming symptoms of discontent appeared. The archbishop felt that the French monarchy was about to miss the great tide in its destiny, and he determined to hazard much to retrieve the chances.

The voice of Michael had now been mute ever since the events of Pataye, and Jeanne d'Arc had in vain solicited its guidance, until a certain night, when it again became audible in her slumberous sense. The voice commanded her to attend the dauphin at supper on the following evening, and once more most solemnly admonish him to set out on his coronation to Rheims. If he still refused, a sign would be granted to her that would convince the most incredulous, and which she was to seek in the chapel of the palace, before the high altar, opposite the shrine of the most Blessed Virgin.

The court resided at this period at Bourges, in the palace of Duke John the Magnificent. It was in the great hall of this edifice that Charles VII. kept his revels, usually supping in public, in compliance with an ancient custom of his ancestors. The hour of this meal was probably selected for Jeanne to seek audience, that no vigilance might be aroused by the necessity of asking permission. Accordingly, she presented herself among the numerous throngs that filled the hall, and at the moment when the king was delightedly listening to a long lay, in the form of a dialogue on love, which the Lady of Beauty and the lady of La Trimouille warbled like two nightingales together, with a whole choir of lutes accompanying.

The courtiers had of course shifted with the times and the looks of the favourite minister; and the entrance of Jeanne d'Arc, which a few weeks before would have made a commotion, scarcely seemed of sufficient consequence to be announced. But the Maid of Orleans needed no heralding; and the instant her dark, melancholy eyes were upon the king, he *felt* her presence, and started from his reverie of pleasure.

"Peace awhile, sweet warblers!" he then said, with a feeling of compunction. "Our glorious raven is among us again—and it shames us now to remember how seldom she deems us worth her company, of late. Have we not forgiven each other, Jeanne, or why dost thou look so mournfully at me?"

"O, my most dear liege! wherefore wilt thou not believe me?" she replied, with the sudden vehemence of high-wrought feeling. "When has Heaven failed in its promises?—and Heaven has promised me that I shall crown you in Rheims. Believe in God, and in St. Michael, and in me—for the last time I implore you—and depart with me! I tell you, dauphin, the gates of hell itself shall not prevail against you from the moment you are anointed with the oil of the dove!"

"La Trimouille will tell you, maiden, wherefore we cannot move on this enterprise." replied Charles, languidly.

"He will speak to me of distance—it shall be passed; of castles and fortresses—they shall be taken; of Rheims in the hands of our enemies—it shall yield itself; of want of provisions—we shall find them on the way! Of want of money—the soldiers and people will march with me, unpaid; and woe to the nobles and chi-

valry of France if they refuse to do the like!" exclaimed Jeanne, with torrent-like eloquence. "What more? The leopard cannot spring until we are ready to return upon her; the Constable shall keep its glaring eye-balls busy by stirring in Normandy! What more? Oh, come with me, my dauphin, for I do but last a year, and all the rest is fate's and chance's!"

Even Agnes Sorel was carried away by the fervour of this address, and seconded its effect with almost equal earnestness of entreaty. The archbishop, who had carefully abstained, since the events of Pataye, from any open expression of opinion, also took the opportunity to declare himself in favour of the measure. And he judiciously appealed to the fears of La Trimouille, by alluding to the mutinous feeling arising in the army, and its determination to proceed on the journey to Rheims. He hinted the possibilities of some leader taking advantage of the circumstance—the Constable himself, perhaps—and forcing a more unseasonable consent from the council.

"You want to see your diocese, doubtless, my lord of Rheims, being rather a stranger there," said La Trimouille. "But how know we by whose prompting this damsel speaks—what voices these are that mutter to her in the darkness?"

"I will demand of heaven a sign, in which ye shall believe—even thou, La Trimouille!" said the Maid. "Give me a little time to pray to Him who opens the eyes of the blind, in the chapel at hand; and if I return not with a sign and a portent, ye shall find me stark and cold at the foot of the altar!"

"Go, Jeanne—go, gracious one! And on pain of sacrilege, let none follow or presume to cross the threshold of the chapel," said the archbishop, with solemnity. "Yes; go, Jeanne! But these would not have believed with their hands in the wound of the lance!"

Jeanne crossed herself, and bowing reverently, retired from the hall. Every eye watched her, with a mixture of doubt and wonder, to the extremity; and when she disapeared, an universally deep-drawn breath seemed to announce a feeling of relief from the awe of some superior presence.

Probably, the archbishop kept a vigilant observation that no one presumed to follow her as an espial; and Jeanne found herself alone in the shadowy twilight of the magnificent chapel of carved black oak, hung with ancient velvet, and decorated with numerous shrines, belonging to the palace of Bourges. Among these, in particular, was a small but lofty octagon chamber, dedicated to the Virgin, lighted by a narrow strip of stained window, in which she was taught to expect the portent.

Kneeling opposite to this shrine, on the steps of the great altar, Jeanne clasped her hands and fell into so deep a passion of ecstatic devotion, that she forgot even the promise until a ray of light, streaming upon her, startled her attention. Looking up with joyful expectation, not unmingled with the terror likely to be infused by a supernatural presence, however desired and holy, she perceived a figure standing in a glory of golden light that irradiated the whole shrine. Now, as before, the archangel Michael appeared to her rapt

gaze, clad in armour of the most brilliant workmanship, his face concealed by his helmet and the shadow of his mighty wings of silvery down. But instead of his usual fiery sword, he bore on a cushion of purple velvet a massive gold crown of antique workmanship, with gems of extraordinary magnitude and splendour. Jeanne bowed her forehead to the ground, and awaited the words of the celestial messenger as greedily as the parched earth expects the rain.

"The unbelievers demand a sign: behold, here is one!" said the warlike angel, in his calm musical tones. "This is the crown of Charlemagne, guarded by the English in the holy treasury of Rheims, within coffers of iron and steel. Go, and in the presence of the king and of his whole court, deliver it to the archbishop, Regnault, with these words: that if the king will trust in thee, and execute thy behest in the journey to Rheims, he shall crown him there with this diadem, which will ere sunrise miraculously return to the sacristy of Rheims. But if not, Charles of Valois shall never win back his inheritance, and the crown of Charlemagne shall blaze on the brow of strangers, or be shivered to atoms beneath the tramp of a wild multitude."

"But, ah, blessed archangel! they will not believe me. I am aweary! I know not what ails me of late, but I am not that I was. Take me with thee to the tranquil gardens of Paradise!" sighed the unhappy prophetess.

"Do thine office first. But what is thy woe—doth triumph ever fail thee? Or dost thou conceal aught from thy confessor that should be revealed?" returned the messenger.

"Nothing,—to which I can give a name—I know not what ever-ravening fire is in my heart—yet methinks I no longer serve France and my king in mere obedience to heavenly commands! I feel as if I shall grieve when my task is done, when I have no longer the right to battle for him; to be with him; to gaze upon him; to serve him with my life and dearest blood!" said Jeanne.

"Courage! there is no blame in thee, and the trial will last but little longer," replied Michael, who certainly was not too human in his conclusions from this outburst of feeling. "Go: and doubt not they will believe; for, would the English, who guard this treasure, suffer it, without a miracle, out of their sight? or would any mere earthly owner trust a wreath and gems of inestimable value to the care of a country girl and the hands of a rapacious and impoverished court?"

The messenger disappeared as he concluded the words; and after a pause of ecstatic thanksgiving, Jeanne proceeded to the shrine to take up the crown, which he had placed on a little altar in it. It was now nearly dark, but Jeanne discerned the precious crown by the effulgence of the jewellery. A sweet odour breathed around, such as an angel, indeed, might have left; and her imagination, exalted to a splendid insanity, seemed to people the chapel with radiant forms of the mythology of triumphant suffering with which the Catholic Church replaced that of the paganism it extinguished. A magnificent company followed her in shining squadrons, or she dreamed so wakingly,

into the royal hall. Her apparition excited instant attention, and a deep feeling of awe involuntarily sunk on every heart when men marked the wild glory of her look, and the half-frenzied triumph in her eyes. The guards had already lighted the torches which they bore to illumine the king's presence-chamber at night, and simultaneously raising them, threw the diadem into a brilliant cataract of sparkles. All eyes were caught by this splendour; and when Jeanne approached, knelt before the king, and raising the crown to him, repeated the message of the archangel, the most incredulous were struck with amazement.

"It is indeed the royal wreath of Charlemagne! I have beheld it often in my youth when I was of the chapter of Rheims, and princes came to see the sacred things of France," said the archbishop.

"It is worth, in mere money, a hundred thousand livres. It is at all events a godsend to our famished treasury," said the argentier, with a well understood glance at Regnault de Chartres.

"Jacques Cœur, thou speakest sacrilege!" exclaimed the archbishop. "This crown, we have all heard, is only to become the king's in the cathedral of Rheims. And, look, some gorgeous presence has come to reclaim the sacred pledge! On pain of excommunication, let no man stir but the Maid, for surely some heavenly messenger is there!"

While the archbishop spoke, a door, which privately communicated with the chapel of the palace, flew open, and the form which had appeared to Jeanne became visible to the king and those immediately beside him, in its solemn haze of splendour. The king, the archbishop, La Trimouille, Jeanne, and the prince of fools, were the only personages whom the peculiar angle of the inlet permitted to behold this supernatural visitant. It appeared but for an instant, waved its hand, and vanished.

"It would have the crown restored!—Archbishop, what is this?" said Charles, whose cheeks were deadly pale.

"It wears the attributes of the warrior-archangel Michael, and as such believe it and execute its behests!" replied the prelate.

"I will; I swear it—oppose who that may any longer!" said the king, staring in confusion at his courtiers; and La Trimouille himself uttered not a word of dissent to the unanimous cry of "Rheims! Rheims! we will to Rheims!" which resounded through the chamber.

"For me, I will go pray in the oratory, lest my heart even burst with joy and—and—grief," said Jeanne, with suffocating emotion. "But I am relieved of the mighty burden of my solitary visions. We have seen it too. Resolve on all things, for at Gien within three days will I raise the standard of France, and bear it on to Rheims through all impediments."

"There only shall we find the crown of France, for, lo! it has vanished;" said the archbishop, pointing in seeming amazement to the cushion which, during the momentary confusion, had lost its magnificent burden.

"Jugglers!" muttered La Trimouille within his teeth; but he perceived that the tide was too strong to be resisted, and made no farther opposition to the archbishop's proposal, that they should proceed at once to counsel on the fittest means of prosecuting the enterprise.

Jeanne d'Arc meanwhile retired to the chapel, to pour forth her soul in one of those ecstasies of thanksgiving and religious joy which such an event was likely to kindle in her enthusiastic and believing spirit. Time passed unnoticed in this joyful paroxysm, and the council had separated, and day was breaking ere she was roused from it by the entrance of an unexpected visitant. It was the queen, Marie d'Anjou, without attendant, and indeed alone.

This royal lady approached Jeanne d'Arc with as much timidity and deference as if their ranks had been reversed, and that it was the country girl who had entered the presence of a sovereign. The traces of tears were visible on her usually placid and resigned features, and there was an unwonted flush on her cheeks, and an eagerness in her step, which attested the existence of some extraordinary emotion in her gentle nature.

"Holy woman, whom I reverence next to our blessed Lady, I pray you pardon me this interruption," said Marie d'Anjou, reverently pausing as Jeanne started from her knees. "But no other time may perchance be given to me to entreat some consolation to my great grief from your celestial treasuries of pity and mercy! May you hear me now, or shall I come at some other season?"

"In myself, I am but the handmaiden of the royal dame of France!—the honour and glory of what else I am, by the aid of heaven, is due only to heaven," replied Jeanne, modestly, and with a vague but unutterably sorrowful sympathy swelling in her bosom as she gazed at the wife of Charles VII. Her heart strangely anticipated the words of the queen's reply.

"It is determined!—ye depart: my king, my husband, my Charles, departs on this glorious expedition to Rheims!" said Marie d'Anjou, whose tears resumed their flow. "Our Lady knows I confide him without fear—without regret—to your inspired guidance, Maid of Orleans! But they forbid me to accompany him; they command me to remain in Bourges with my baby son, the sole hope of France, should his father perish, which God and all saints forefend! To this also I would yield without murmuring, since the good of France, since the safety of my child, demands it. But another goes to usurp my due place in those gorgeous rites, who has already usurped my place in my husband's heart, and deprives me of all but the outward honours and the inward sorrows of the wife of France. He will not indeed dare to crown her—to seat her on his throne by his side in the cathedral of Rheims—before the gaze of the world! But not the less will Agnes Sorel figure in the pageant as the queen of his love, the queen of beauty, the queen of pride, the queen of the courtiers, who pay homage only to power, the queen of the multitude, who pay fealty with their eyes!"

A long pause followed this burst of indignant though stifled

passion from the heart of the injured wife of the voluptuous Charles. She watched with anxiety and wonder the spasmodic changes in the countenance of Jeanne d'Arc, who yet kept her eyes fixed on the ground.

"May this be so?" said the latter at last, in a low tone. "It hath been whispered to me thus, but I strove not to believe it. I could not,—I would not! And is it so?"

"Wherefore didst thou disbelieve it, Jeanne?" said the princess mournfully. "Did the smiles and careless demeanour beneath which I conceal the ravening anguish of my heart deceive even thine inspired penetration? or did the precautions which my haughty rival takes to cover her shame dazzle thee too?"

"Neither; but I believed in the tender and loving looks of Charles himself,—of the king, your husband, lady. But men, I find, are very cruel!" replied Jeanne, and with a rush of tears that amply accompanied the drops distilling from the eyes of Marie d'Anjou. "Ah, gentle moon, how art thou outglared by a false sun of the night—a meteor of the marsh!" she continued, with wrath kindling and flashing over her face. "But rest thou content, Lady of France; this woman shall not shame our cause, and our glories, and our triumph, with her adulterous presence! She will understand so much perchance from a proclamation which I will have published on all the winds; if not, she shall learn it from my lips, and before and audience, which shall rend away for ever the false cloak wherewith she thinks to cheat the fiend, and lie like innocence! Rest content; this enterprise of Rheims is of as holy and blessed a nature as the quest of the sancgraal—the chalice of the blood of the Redeemer—which our fathers followed in the songs of the minstrels, and which nothing impure or defiled could ever attain. Rest content; the adulterous paramour who has plunged our prince in mortal sin, by her accursed blandishments of beauty and discourse, shall remain behind, and from her guilt must he be absolved ere we depart. When *he* returns—for I shall not—be it thy task, O queen! —and my reward—to preserve him from her enticements."

"Thou wilt not return? Doth any mischance await thee on this great enterprise?" said Marie d'Anjou, with evident consternation.

"At Rheims, my mission is fulfilled. What may after chance I know not: but I purpose to return to my native village, and comfort an aged father, whom I left there in sorrow," said Jeanne, very drearily. "Therefore, royal lady, it is wisest to bid farewell, at parting, lest we should not meet again."

"If thou art in any realm of earth which painful pilgrimage may reach, we do not part for ever!" said the young queen, fervidly. "And then, as now, I will kneel to thee to ask a blessing from the last of those glorified saints whom God has granted for the consolation of mankind, and assurance of the faith."

"Kneel not to me; I am human—very human!" said Jeanne, with a shudder. "Or, lady, if thou wilt kneel, let us kneel together, and implore of our Lady the aid and comfort which she knows

that women however honoured, need; for wept she not tears of blood on Calvary with those that dropped from her Son's saving wounds?"

Jeanne knelt as she spoke beside the queen, and uttered one of those gorgeous effusions of poesy and devotion that formed the staple of her genius. Marie d'Anjou, tearfully and with deep reverence, uttered responses at such intervals as occurred; and, at the conclusion, fervently embraced her heroic ally. There was something lingering and mournful in the return made by Jeanne; but she no longer wept, and it almost seemed to the queen when they parted that something sadder than sorrow, and yet mysteriously sublime and glorious, shone on her brows, like a martyr's wreath of amaranth!

CHAPTER XXII.

GIEN.

"But alas! to make me
The fixed figure for the hand of scorn
To point his slow unmoving finger at!"—*Othello.*

THE rendezvous of the army that was to attend Charles VII. on his adventurous quest of the crown of France was appointed in the town of Gien, on the Loire. And thither flocked so great a multitude, not only of disciplined soldiery and chivalry, but of the common people, destitute of everything but a wild enthusiasm and desire to share in the marvels of the Maid, that the royal generals were obliged to dismiss the greater part. Even this was accomplished with difficulty. The formidable dangers of a march through a country entirely possessed by the enemy, the certainty that no pay was to be given, the doubt whether food could be furnished in sufficient quantity, the abstinence and privations openly announced as concomitants of this holy campaign—nothing abated the passionate desire of the multitude to follow the fortunes of their idol.

It was remarked, as one of the wonders of the time, that men of noble birth, whom the disasters of the war had reduced to such poverty that they could not obtain the proper garniture of their class, no longer disdained to join the ranks of their sovereign, in the meanest. Knights and nobles served not unfrequently as simple men-at-arms, and infused their own loftier spirit in the vassalage of France. Yeomen and archers, deprived of their proper weapons, embraced, as an invaluable privilege, the right of wielding the axe or club of the serf. So mighty was the change wrought in the feelings of the dejected and wobegone population of France by the courage of a woman! The love of wandering and violent achievements, innate in the Frankish blood, revived in all its force, or rather frenzy.

France had not seen such an army for many a day as met on the plains before Gien on the day of departure, expecting the arrival of

the king and court, to start on the great and literally crowning enterprise of Jeanne d'Arc's career. The order and regularity reigning throughout the lines attested the indefatigable labours to which she had devoted herself. Whilst the other commanders employed the interval of the assemblage in mirth and festivity, she had been incessantly occupied in preparing the army for their march. Some days before the arrival of the king, she entered into the campaign by pitching her tent in the fields below Gien; and thither, without orders or commission of any sort having been officially conferred on her, but by the force of the popular instinct, all the bodies of troops that arrived directed themselves, as to the head-quarters of a commander-in-chief. The analysis and selection to which these corps were subjected, the variety of enterprises, full of fruit, assigned to those rejected from the undertaking on Rheims, disclosed the sagacity and foresight of her genius in the most striking lights, had there been any witnesses capable or willing to appreciate it.

But the military point of view was not the only one in which the sacred leader of France regarded her host. Such an army never before took the field; no woman but its leader was present in it! The virgin warrior caused it to be incessantly proclaimed and enforced, that no woman of loose character should be permitted to accompany the march of an army whose enterprise was sacred, and which had the Mother of God for protectress and inspirer; and the wild soldiery that flocked to her standard were not much burdened with damsels of a more exalted description. But scarcely any circumstance could better mark the reverence and affection inspired by Jeanne than the submission paid even to this decree by her thronging levies. She herself watched assiduously over its execution; and the result was, that so sober, so silent, so orderly a host was scarcely ever, in any land, assembled on the morning of a long march as awaited the approach of Charles VII., ready at an instant's warning to depart. No dice, no drinking, no women! Every man seemed preparing to perform some religious rite, and every gaze was fixed upon the Maid, when she appeared, with the joy, admiration, and awe due to a being of celestial nature, in whom all hopes were centred. But indeed for the magic exercised by the genius of the girl of Domremy, what enterprise could be wilder and less feasible than that on which the hopes of France were about to be hazarded?

The French captains, who nearly unanimously disapproved of it, were certainly not unjustified in their reluctance to join in it, by other than military reasons. The most distinguished leaders were no longer noticed in her presence; her glory effaced the brightest that entered its sphere, or absorbed it, as it seemed to the discontented luminaries themselves. Even the generous Dunois, in his passionate thirst for distinction and fame, shared in some measure the feelings of the baser throng, in this regard.

The chiefs of the army, the culled flowers of the chivalry of France, nevertheless, assembled by some irresistible attraction around her, the moment she appeared at the head of the host. Four marshals of France; the counts of Dunois and Clermont; the duke of Bourbon;

the famous knights, La Hire and Poton de Saintrailles; Louis de Culant, admiral of France; and a great number of the haughtiest peers and chivalry of the land, were ranged around the heroic peasant girl, like a squadron guarding its chief. She was in the light and beautiful suit of armour which the king had caused to be made for her, her victorious standard drooping beside her—whose elevation was to be the signal of departure. And yet her appearance was not that of the terrible Bellona, a goddess to whom Alain Chartier often compared her, in his learned rhymes. There was a calm and settled resolve in her looks, but something much more of humility and sadness than of the blood-thirsty wrath and defiance of her mythological simile, in their general expression. This became slightly perturbed, and even agitated, when the bombards of John of Lorraine, the flourishes of trumpets, and the shouts audible within the walls of Gien, announced that the king was passing through the town, and approaching his host. Very shortly afterwards the gates opened, and Jeanne's eye watched with extreme anxiety to observe what formed the royal company.

A splendid mass of nobles, knights, courtiers, and ladies, poured forth, followed by the enthusiastic and shouting populace of Gien. Little as the appearance of females in the monarch's train pleased Jeanne, her attention was instantly caught and absorbed by the splendour and beauty of the young sovereign's person as he rode in complete armour at the head of his escort. Until now she had never beheld the king in military garb, which in his indolence and love of ease he in general eschewed. But now it appeared to the impassioned and gorgeously imaginative vision of the warlike girl of Domremy, that she beheld some youthful god of battles, clad in knightly array; or, as a Grecian might have dreamed the deity of song and light would have looked, arrayed in the armour of Mars.

She shaded her eyes as if dazzled, and for some moments joy and admiration shone in them like a kindling fire, and every thought but such as intense, all-absorbing, and yet unconscious love could rouse, vanished from her mind. Meanwhile the king advanced, gracefully acknowledging, at every tramp of his superb steed, the sky-shaking applause with which the army greeted the approach of its royal leader. Dunois was twice obliged to exclaim, "We must meet our liege—*we* are not the nobler group!" ere Jeanne loosed the bridle of her steed, and advanced with the other captains.

The manners of Charles VII., naturally engaging and amiable in the highest degree, were on this joyful occasion peculiarly so. But among all the leaders, his eye signalled out Jeanne only, and his hand was extended to her alone.

"With this clasp we welcome all our host—its soul is in thy noble breast, our Jeanne!" said the joyous prince. "Nay, if we dared forget thou art a woman as well as a conquering captain—were not eyes as jealous as they are bright upon us—we could find it in our heart to press thee to our bosom, as we would we could each loyal knave of our host! Marry, this grand show consoles me well for wearing all this weight of steel to make one of it! What say you, lords of France? Have we had marshalled beneath our banners such

a host since we rode with our poor sire, a stripling, to cheer the bands that went to Agincourt?"

"Gentle dauphin, let us never speak of those evil-omened days again!" replied Jeanne; and she closed her eyes with an expression of pain from the contemplation of the gallant company which now approached.

And yet it was a splendid and attractive spectacle. A number of ladies, magnificently mounted and clad as if for a hunting party in a royal chase, formed the centre of the courtly squadron. The Lady of Beauty and the wife of the favourite, La Trimouille, were the most conspicuous of these; the former by her extraordinary loveliness and pomp of apparel and trappings. Flushed with joy and the expectation of triumph and pleasure, the haughty mistress of Charles VII. merited indeed, in person, the territorial designation she bore. She had even ventured, when for the first time released from the presence of the queen, to assume ornaments appropriate only to royal magnificence. She had quartered her own device of the sorrel tree with the lilies of France; and in pretended allusion to the object of the enterprise, but in real affectation of royal state, bore a coronet on her brows of the same imperial flower.

Many of the courtiers marked their sense of the supremacy attained by the Lady of Beauty in a singular manner, but in accordance with the chivalric gallantry of the age. Professing themselves to be her servants, they had actually assumed a species of livery distinguished by her cognisance. Among these was the grave argentier himself, who is thought—and not without cause, if the interpretations bestowed by some critics on the mystic sculptures remaining in his house at Bourges, be correct—to have had some private and very personal reason for the adherence he displayed, on all occasions, to the beautiful paramour of Charles VII. The only extravagance the treasurer never remonstrated against was that of Agnes Sorel, profuse as it might be.

The Lady of Beauty had, however, friends on all sides. It was scarcely possible to resist her charms and wit combined, when she chose to exert them; and even her secret enemy and antagnoist, La Trimouille, neglected his own consort to bask in her smiles, on this occasion. The latter seemed sufficiently indifferent to the circumstance, it is true, and came along smiling and jesting merrily with the duke of Alençon, who perhaps took that method to avenge himself for the attention which Agnes bestowed on the hated minister. But the archbishop of Rheims, and chief of the clergy of France, himself, seemed to think it no scandal to pay assiduous court to the Lady of Beauty. His richly-decorated mule kept pace with her palfrey, and mingled the music of its bells with her clearer and sweeter laughter.

She seemed so beautiful and so happy, that Jeanne's firmset purpose, for an instant, relented, until she noted with what amorous and melting eyes the king turned to gaze at his fair paramour. A deep sentiment of anger, which she imagined was roused by the conviction of the evil this sinful passion must bring on their cause, if its indulgence were permitted, restored her then to resolution.

"Why dost thou gaze at me as at an unwelcome guest, Jeanne?" said the Lady of Beauty, checking her steed immediately before the Maid. "I can claim some share in the honour of this enterprise, since I have constantly advised and urged it; but at all events, I have the right to share the dangers into which I have helped to plung our king!"

"He is in none—unless evil accompaniment foil our Lady's blessing on his cause!" replied Jeanne, slowly and sternly. "Lady, know, if you knew it not, that there is but one woman in all France has the right to accompany the dauphin on this holy war, which is only less sacred than a crusade for the redemption of the sepulchre! The queen remains at Bourges! I pray you understand me without further plain-speaking, and return the way you came!"

A thunderbolt falling directly at her feet would have less astonished and horrified the Lady of Beauty than these words. She stared in bewildered wonder at the stern-browed prophetess, and then at her escort, whose countenances reflected her own with more than courtier fidelity.

"What mean you, good maiden?" she said, at last finding that no one spoke. "The king, my lord, has invited me to his noble coronation at Rheims. I am his vassal for the county and domains of Beauté-sur-Marne, for which I never yet done homage; and I must obey, and will!"

"It is true, Jeanne; I have summoned the Lady of Beauty to my plenary court in Rheims," said Charles.

"Then must she go alone—certes, not with this host, royal prince!" replied Jeanne, not without agitation. "Press me not for reasons;—but look around. I have promised the Virgin Queen of Heaven and the purest martyrs, Margaret and Catherine, who guide mine enterprise, that I will suffer no woman of lewd demeanour or life—for I know not the courtly words for these things—to join in it. And I will not! The paramour of a king, and the leman of a camp boy, are to me but one and the same."

During this speech the complexion of Agnes Sorel changed through an infinitude more of hues than those of a dying dolphin. The overwhelming shame of this public exposure in a manner petrified the Lady of Beauty; and it was completed by the universal murmur of applause throughout the ranks of the host, and the loud laugh which the duke of Alençon feigned he could not suppress, at the foolish audacity of the Maid.

"Thou art a madwoman, Jeanne!" exclaimed Charles, in answer to the beseeching eyes of Agnes. "Nor do I desire a crown without happiness; it is merely a clod of gold! And am I to be mastered and controlled in the midst of mine own army? As well by mine enemies of England! Let all the world hear it: I will not advance another step, if my vassal of Beauté is not suffered to accompany me, to do homage in Rheims!"

The archbishop himself now interposed on behalf of the vassal of Beauté. "Daughter," he said, "thy zeal is good in itself, but mistaken. Thou wilt believe in *me* when I tell thee this Lady of Beauté-

sur-Marne may be of our company without scandal, since the king is pleased to desire it, on condition that he shares her society only in public, and under thine own eye."

"Thou art wont to seek women's company on thy warlike journeys, Jeanne. Let me share thy tent to Rheims," said Agnes, in her most winning tones.

"God and our Lady forbid!" replied Jeanne, with a vehemence of deprecation that heaped up the measure of the Lady of Beauty's disgrace. "And thou, archbishop, be not a time-server and misleader of the flock! Nay, thou wouldst deliver it up to the wolf, for I say again, if this woman wends with us, the saints who protect will desert us,—and what am I, merciful Heaven! or all of us, without their aid?"

It was now the turn of Regnault de Chartres, archbishop and duke of Rheims, to retreat, abashed and confounded, before the indignant sincerity of a peasant girl.

"Go, lady!" she continued in a milder voice, after the pause of amazement had continued for several minutes, without any one attempting to break it. "Return to your castle on the Marne, and weep, not such tears as you now shed, but as the repentant Magdalen poured on the feet of Christ. Return; for sooner than thou shalt go with us, I will seize and expel thee from the camp as disgracefully as the meanest harlot whom I have driven forth in her shame and loathsomeness!"

"Jeanne is mad, indeed!" murmured the argentier, within his teeth, even while gazing with a species of awe at the form which enshrined a moral daring so august.

"Then I return with Agnes. Go on to Rheims who will, and crown any log of wood ye find there!" said the king, yielding to his indignation. But as he spoke the words, so terrific an uproar arose among the soldiery that all turned in dismay towards them. The agitation and fury in the faces of the host were such that the Bay Alençon himself grew pale with alarm, and La Trimouille exclaimed in an aghast tone—"They will tear her—and perhaps all of us—to pieces."

"They shall harm no man, still less woman," replied Jeanne; and the mere glance of her eye pacified and stopped the ranks which had already set foot to advance, apparently with the intention of retaining the king by force, and probably of maltreating his beautiful mistress.

"Let them slay us together—apart they shall not!" exclaimed Charles, urging his horse to the side of Agnes; and again the dreadful uproar arose; again the lines advanced one awful tramp; and again the gesture of Jeanne d'Arc arrested their progress.

"No, Charles, my king, leave me; go on thy glorious way alone!" said Agnes, with a mingled emotion of magnanimity and fear. "Go on thy glorious way! her barbarous empire ceases at Rheims, and hence thou shalt return to me, if I weep not my heart away over the memory of this insult, which makes all former shames compared with mine scarce worth the noting!"

"Lady, I am grieved for thee: deem not this office is to me by

much less bitter and unpleasing than the rest of my fate!" said Jeanne, greatly moved. "But speak not of return—woo not the king back to thine adulterous arms! France demands a lawful progeny; many buds, for her lily stalks are nigh bare of bloom. Rather retire to some peaceful nunnery, and by the rest of thy life win the pardon of the queenly wife of Charles, and of France, for the first part of it."

"Ungrateful witch! I have supported thy mad projects thus far, which thou deemest wrought by some magic of thine own, but henceforth—henceforth—" and the Lady of Beauty became inarticulate with wrath and disdain.

"I shall not trouble any one very long," replied Jeanne, calmly. "When my mission is accomplished—when the crown is on the dauphin's brow—do what thou canst, or what thou wilt, against me. I have done what I have done! And now it is time that we depart—the king with us, and thou in such company as deem themselves no fitter for ours!"

"I shall not wait the order to tramp it," said the Lady of La Tramouille, laughing somewhat wildly. "And, ladies, let us all be wiser than those of King Arthur's court, who dared to try on the mantle-made-amiss after it had exposed the sweet frailties of the bright Guenever. We will say on our return that we took fright at Gien, and left the enterprise for bolder hearts to follow."

"You say well, lady and wife," said La Trimouille, sneeringly; and turning to the king he whispered, "Let them go, in God's name, my liege, or these fellows will as surely tear them to pieces, and those who are fools enough to defend them, as ever the dragon of St. George swallowed a lambkin in the meadows!"

Charles burst into tears of rage and indignation at these words, the truth of which he perceived but too plainly. But it was much more dread for the safety of Agnes than for his own that induced him to yield a reluctant submission to the visible determination of his host.

"Adieu then, my charming Agnes! sun of my day, star of my night!" he exclaimed in a voice broken by convulsive sobs. "All the honours and glories that a king can confer shall recompense thee for this base insult! At present thou seest I am their prisoner, not their prince. Adieu, my life, my soul; for until I behold thee again, I am but an outward form of man without breath or being!"

"Farewell, Charlot; we shall not meet again as long as this sorceress keeps you enslaved," said Agnes, with dry, passionate sobs that seemed to shake her heart. "Never, never, until thou art a king indeed—until this savage saint has gone back to dwell among her bears and rocks—never hope nor wish to see Agnes Sorel again!"

So saying, the Lady of Beauty violently wrenched round her palfrey's head, pricked it with a severity it had never yet experienced, and galloped back, almost alone, to the walls of Gien. The king watched her disappear into the gates, and then turning with swollen eyes and wrathful looks from Jeanne and his powerless captains, he rode through the ranks of the host in a contrary direction. The soldiers were drawn up to be reviewed by their sovereign, but he took not the

slightest notice of them; and La Trimouille was his only companion for a considerable distance, until the captains of the army, as if anxious to dissociate themselves from Jeanne's proceedings, set off in a body, and joined him, considerably in advance of the army. Not a single man offered to follow any of these leaders until Jeanne gave the signal. This was to be the raising of her standard. But she seemed to have forgotten the circumstance, and it trembled convulsively in her grasp, with its spear in the dust, for some minutes after the king's departure.

"But all will finish at Rheims,—this draught grows too bitter for human lips," she said, musingly; and then, with a start, raised aloft the banner. "March! to Rheims! our Lady leads!" she exclaimed; and with a deafening uproar of shouts and trumpets, a thousand standards rose at once, and an universal tramp attested the sway of her will on the masses.

"Our consort makes us a something scant ceremony at parting—he is in a hurry to be count of Boulogne," said the lady of La Trimouille; and, bending over from her saddle, she added in a deep, earnest under-tone to the Maid—"Miracle of human faith and daring, look that thou beware well of my smiling spouse! Trust the glitter of the adder, but not his smiles! And believe yet another word. As surely as the Heavens are above the earth, thou art utterly lost for this ignominious discarding of the Lady of Beauty, unless thou takest her place and power!"

"Vile court! vile men! vile women! vile all! Why hath our Lady sent me to save such a race?" said Jeanne, after having remained motionless on the same spot nearly an hour after the utterance of these words of warning, until the last of the rear guard itself was on the march. "But no, it is France! it is my land! my country! that I was sent to save. And France, France! wilt thou remember me with love and honour when these kings and these nobles . . . yet no, again, unhappy dauphin! I cannot utter aught that breathes against thee and thy blood, and these direful words of prophecy that crowd upon me shall be mute for ever!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MARCH TO RHEIMS.

"The more and less came in with cap and knee;
Met him in boroughs, cities, villages;
Attended him on bridges, stood in lanes,
Laid gifts before him, proffered him their oaths,
Gave him their heirs; as pages followed him,
Even at the heels, in golden multitudes."—*Henry IV.*

It may be imagined that the young king pursued his march on this first day of his first campaign in no very satisfactory mood. Until now, pretended fears for his safety, and real fears for their own, had prevented his favourites and ministers from allowing him to join

personally in the warfare carried on in his behalf; and his first experience of military manners was certainly not likely to enhance the little pleasure he had ever taken in violent exertions of the kind.

The captains and nobles who had now gathered round him by no means endeavoured to diminish his indignation at the conduct of Jeanne d'Arc. Finding they could not use her to their own purposes, they were well pleased with an opportunity to assail an authority which controlled theirs, and had been so disagreeably wielded on the sovereign himself. The archbishop of Rheims, her usual defender, was too much astonished and chagrined at her behaviour to himself to interpose. The argentier resented the disgrace of Agnes Sorel more acutely than any he could have suffered in his own person, and even Dunois's chivalrous heart was stirred with pity and indignation at the treatment of the lovely Lady of Beauty, in whose honour he had broken many a lance, both in tournament and battle.

But these very circumstances suddenly changed La Trimouille into a partisan and favourer of the Maid. He perceived the boundless power she exercised over the soldiery, and, full of terror for his personal safety, now that he found himself in the hands of the leaders whom he well knew to be his enemies, the thought of winning Jeanne's protection for himself and the king occurred to him like a break of light. He determined from that instant to draw her into an alliance, and the more bitterly the exasperated nobles railed at her despotism and usurpation of all authority, the more bent was he upon the project.

The first time the king and his minister found themselves alone, La Trimouille began the execution of his design. It was at the conclusion of the first day's advance, when the tents were pitched about four leagues from Gien.

Charles was a man of passions easily and vehemently roused, but which subsided as quickly; and his resentment had worked off its effervescence the more rapidly that it was stirred unceasingly by the enemies of Jeanne, during the day. He was sensible and quick-sighted when he chose to exert his intellect, and he could not but perceive that Jeanne had acted in consistency with her character and mission, in the part she had taken. He was superstitious; and though La Trimouille had not failed to scoff and laugh him out of belief in the miracle of the crown, the grand and visionary nature of Jeanne, and her wonderful successes, imposed another but scarcely less powerful species of credulity upon him. The dangers of his expedition appalled and amazed himself, and rendered a reliance on some superior and even supernatural energy a relief eagerly sought by his careless and indolent temperament.

The first steps of the advance were, moreover, signalised by circumstances that could not but awaken gratitude in a heart much less affectionate and sensitive to tender impressions than that of Charles VII. The towns and castles which were within any reasonable vicinage of the line of march seemed to have only awaited his appearance to resign themselves to his hands. And all was done, as it seemed, by the pervading power of the Maid. Deputations asked only to see her, and

ascribed alike the fears or the affection that brought them back to their allegiance to her influence. The magnificent services she had already rendered were now more powerfully presented to the young king, in the visible additions continually added to the number.

We have already observed, that La Trimouille possessed an all-powerful influence with the king; and he brought it to bear on this subject with a perseverance and ingenuity that soon effected its object. He persuaded Charles, that by a close alliance with the Maid, they should secure a power with the soldiery that would baffle any attempt the captains were likely to make, in the confidence of their disunion, at the restoration of the ferocious constable. He even insinuated, with the skill of the earlier arts by which he had risen, how easy it would be for a young and handsome sovereign to win the entire sway over a youthful peasant-girl, who had a noble person as well as a divine mission.

Charles and his minister agreed, in the end, on the expediency of a reconciliation; and La Trimouille had his own private reasons for desiring to hasten it.

The first strong city which was likely to offer any efficient resistance to the march of the French army on Rheims was that of Auxerre. It was in the hands of the armed citizens, who, so far, had shown great devotion to the cause embraced by their lord paramount, the duke of Burgundy. But being alike unwilling to receive a garrison, or attempt of themselves to withstand so powerful a foe, the Auxerrois had privately sent deputies to offer two thousand crowns to La Trimouille if he would procure that the king's host should pass without assailing them. The minister had eagerly accepted this bribe; and, indeed, the excessive leanness of the royal treasury, into which the sum was ostensibly paid, permitted no refusal of food, of whatever quality. But La Trimouille doubted not that the captains would be glad of an opportunity to vex and thwart him.

In pursuance of an arranged plan, when the chief officers presented themselves, by the king's invitation, to sup with him at nightfall in his tent, his first question was for Jeanne, who was not in their company. To the very general astonishment, he followed up this step by dispatching the master of his household with a special summons, finding she had not considered herself included in the invitation, addressed by the king, to the captains of the army who surrounded him at the time.

Jeanne came, for obedience to her sovereign on all points that she did not believe opposed to the success of her mission, was a part of her religion, and all her happiness. The humility and agitation of her demeanour, the excessive paleness of her countenance, moved the pity of Charles, always most sensitive to the impressions of the instant. To the astonishment and deep vexation of nearly all present, the king advanced to meet her in person, saluted her with great cordiality, and uttering some remarkable words of kindness and reconciliation, led her to a seat beside himself.

"Jeanne," he said, "I see well that what thou hast done was intended for our good, and by no means to offend us: and we are certain

that thy love and care for our person and glory pass our own. Therefore, we will that thou shalt leave us as seldom as may be on this journey, that we may have thee ever at hand to consult on its due governance; and, until we feast at our coronation in Rheims, this seat on our right hand is thine; and it shall prove the siege perilous for any one else who dares to take it! Nay, and moreover, as we were not born to live wholly without the blessing presence of thy sex, and since thou hast deprived us of every other dame, thou shalt supply the place of all!"

The pallor on Jeanne's cheek deepened at these words, but it was succeeded by so rich a rush of colour, that the unpoetical Alençon himself exclaimed, "My liege, you have the art to make the rose bloom amid snows; and our Jeanne is not altogether made of iron and weather-stained alabaster, as a warrior should be that has the misfortune to be born fair."

The second day's march brought the army before the strong walls of Auxerre. But La Trimouille beheld them rise without dismay, confident in the success of his stratagem. The Maid had scarcely left the side of her reconciled sovereign during the whole day, and seemed devotedly anxious, by the most humble and earnest homage to efface the recollection of the disobedience she had been compelled to display at Gien. La Trimouille had laid out all his powers of insinuation in winning the favour of the potent captainess, and with success, despite the warnings of his well-informed wife. Jeanne d'Arc had passed from the depths of despondency into such a heaven of hope and happiness, that nothing approached but took the hues of her delighted dream. To her absorbed and charmed eye, no treacher could lurk in the bland, sweet smile of the courtier. It was part of the universal serenity and joy shed from the beaming eyes and lips of the splendid idol which she had unconsciously erected into the visible god—the sun of her earthly existence.

Auxerre was summoned, and the reply which La Trimouille expected was made. A group of well-fed and well-armed burgesses appeared on the walls, and declared they had purchased exemption from making any submission by paying into the royal treasury the sum of two thousand crowns. The duke of Alençon instantly espied an advantage against the minister he detested. He declared that the statement must be false, inasmuch as it imputed treason to one of the king's most faithful servants, and he ordered preparations for an assault to be made instantly.

At this juncture the king arrived, taking care to be accompanied by the Maid and La Trimouille. He had but just declared, with a flattering tenderness that nigh drew tears from the eyes of the female warrior, that he intended to take his first lessons in war under her guidance.

The citizens of Auxerre, observing the preparations for attack, loudly demanded an audience, which the king granted by raising his hand. They then clamorously renewed their claims to the truce concluded with the Lord de la Trimouille, to whom they appealed for the truth of the declaration, which was besides witnessed by his letter

La Trimouille candidly and smilingly admitted it, and turning with well-concealed anxiety to Jeanne, inquired if she did not deem the king had the right and power to spare the blood of his misguided subjects, when he pleased.

"Ay! but the king must perchance return this way," she said, with evident surprise and dissatisfaction. "It were fitter we took this insolent city, that eyes its sovereign so irreverently, without bargaining. But faith is the soul of policy—I will speak to these disloyal burgesses."

So saying, she rode nearer to the walls, and her appearance produced its usually marvellous effect. Many of these haughty citizens, who had disdained to show any marks of homage to their sovereign, knelt before that spiritual majesty; and some, who were conscious of having resolved against him, fled, as if from certain chastisement.

It soon appeared both to the friends and foes of La Trimouille how anxious the Maiden had become not again to forfeit her prince's kindness. And yet she seemed as if rebuked in her own heart by this assent to feelings which she perhaps dimly knew should not have swayed in it. Her voice was low and wavering—very unlike the wonted warlike and peremptory tones with which, in the name of God and the Virgin, she recalled the populations of France to their allegiance.

"On condition that ye swear to follow the example of the towns of Champagne, of Troyes, and Rheims, and victual the king's army for a week's onward march, peace be with ye, now and for ever!" she said.

The citizens of Auxerre accepted these conditions with a loud shout of "Vive la Pucelle!" and La Trimouille, with extreme joy, and almost an emotion of gratitude, found himself and his promise saved.

"She is sold to the devil that protects La Trimouille, at least!" muttered Alençon, furiously, to the Marshal de Raix.

"Would they were all three tied to one stake, that lacked but a friendly pine torch to set them in a blaze!" returned that worthy.

Charles, with the frankness of youth and of his position, gave vent in more unmeasured terms than his minister to the joy which the exercise of a power he had never yet so fully possessed gave him. He embraced Jeanne with a warmth which she seemed compelled gently to repulse; and the blushing modesty of her manner, and its increased reserve, henceforth kept continually in the young sovereign's mind, a circumstance which yet he often professed to forget, that his victorious general was also a woman.

The pleased king and his favourite were now more bent than ever on retaining so convenient and powerful an instrument of authority. Thenceforth the hapless Maid of Orleans was continually subjected to the influence of an intoxicating and most subtle passion, which, like the sweetness of some rich perfume, entered at every pore of her existence, and mingled with its finest essences. The loyalty that had ever glowed in her heart persuaded her that it was the same sentiment, exalted by the good and loveable qualities of her prince, that now flamed in it and around it. His safety was so precious, so dear to France, so necessary to its salvation, that the anxiety which consumed her whenever she was not visually certain of it, might well be

accounted for. Her presence seemed to give him so much satisfaction —they were so certainly to part when once the last object of her mission was accomplished, in his coronation,—she owed so much to the goodness that had pardoned what her tenderness represented as an enormous offence, that it was no wonder the simple and passionate-souled girl yielded without suspicion to the intoxicating sweetness of the only draught of happiness she had ever tasted.

This fatal spell was prolonged and heightened by a number of conspiring circumstances. Delighted with the success of his stratagem, La Trimouille took every opportunity of feeding the flame which had become the light of his safety. His dissolute courtier experience too well suggested the means, familiar as he was with evil influences. The sullen captains offered no interruption, perceiving plainly that their own artifice was turned upon them, and under craftier management. But above all, the king himself soon ceased to be an actor in his minister's piece, and the warmth of a real passion succeeded to the cold assumption of one.

It was scarcely in the nature of the affectionate and voluptuous Charles to be often in the society of any woman without feeling some degree of tenderness and interest in her. But on this marvellous campaign he was absolutely separated from all but one, and that one so extraordinary as to rivet attention amidst her congregated sex. In beauty, indeed, Jeanne d'Arc was not to be compared with the rival she had, unknown to herself, banished in the person of Agnes Sorel. But there was the charm of novelty in the wild nobility and grandeur of her form, in its untrained freedom of gesture and movement, in the fire of her glance, in the lofty expression of her countenance. Moreover, the subtle magic of nature was at work, and the desire of pleasing the object of her unconscious passion gave Jeanne the power. It softened the severity of her usual demeanour, it gave the charm of womanly reserve and sweetness to her language, look, and demeanour. It gave her courage to do justice, as it were, to herself—to display to the fostering admiration and interest of her young sovereign the treasures of her rich soul and heart. The sublime poetry of her actions he found more than matched by that of her ideas. Freed from the restraint imposed by the sneering smiles of the court dames, who despised the wondrous gifts of genius because they in nowise resembled their own acquired gewgaws, Jeanne d'Arc dared to be herself. Those looks, despite the grandeur and impetuosity of her spirit, had frozen its outpourings; but in the genial smiles of her prince it revelled and rushed forth with the splendour and beauty of a torrent, spanned by perpetually varying rainbows.

Charles liked nothing better than to be amused, and the freshness and glory of the young peasant's imaginings delighted him. He was superstitious, and the Maid of Orleans had seen the wonders of the unknown world, at least by the force and brightness of an imagination which dazzled itself, by its own strength of vision, into belief of an actual presence. She could withdraw the blue veil from the courts of heaven, and even as they gazed at the skies, describe her magnificent dreams of its realms so vividly, that at times the listener almost fancied

he too could behold the celestial spectacle. No poet in his grandest and most beauteous reverie ever shaped visions so bright as the shepherdess of the Meuse poured forth, in describing the sublime frenzy of her youth. And love now added his beauteous colours to the palette—love poured his splendid lights over the scene! The glorious visionary, who expected in those lustrous realms only the reward of her noble deeds on earth, associated in that idea of perpetual happiness the presence of those whom she had loved, as an essential part, and the enthusiastic delight with which she contemplated the arrival of her king as the most essential of all was in itself an unconscious and most affecting confession of the passion that filled her soul.

Charles's vanity and tenderness were alike amused and flattered by these involuntary revelations. It seemed even to the descendant of Charlemagne, that it was a thing as gorgeous as his ancestral diadem, to be thus idolatrously loved by so glorious and vast a spirit, which, in itself, was a temple more magnificent than the fabulous shrines of Assyrian gods. The romance added to his own destiny, by being thus inwrought with one more amazing than the annals of kings could offer, fascinated the wonder of Charles himself. Danger was before, behind, around; and on the word of a woman and a peasant, wise counsellors, leaders, and an armed host had marched, in defiance of all opposition, on a wild and apparently useless expedition, to put a crown on his head, which seemed miraculously raised from the dust the brighter for the fall!

The period of this wonderful march ever after haunted the memory of Jeanne, as a bright golden break in the stormy darkness of her brief but terrible career. It was only occasionally, and in vague and passing instants, that the sense of danger startled her from the exquisite dream, into whose elysium she was as rapidly lulled again.

"Shall I wear my crown in heaven, and wilt thou wear thy steel, Jeanne?" said the king, when, after a three days' sojourn to obtain the promised provisions, the army left Auxerre; and Jeanne was startled with the glowing smile and look with which he continued, "or shall we wander, hand in hand, like our first parents, untrammelled with these gilded rags of earth, through that flowery paradise thou paintest so well, that methinks I scent their sweet breath—or is it, by holy Denis! thine?"

"Which is sweet as new-mown hay, and no sweeter; albeit, I learn so much only by report!" said the duke of Alençon, observing with malicious joy the burning flush that bathed the brows of Jeanne. "Your grace may have a better success; but I warn all men, I ride in this camp a spy for the queen of France!"

"The queen, I trust, my liege,—nay, I am well assured of it, if goodness and patience may bring woman to bliss,—will be there in paradise with us," replied Jeanne, after a slight pause, and as if detecting the duke's under-purpose; for an expression of contempt—a rare one on her features—visited them. "For the rest, I know not; but I shall not long be encumbered with this weight of steel!"

The king looked at her with a tenderness which, strangely enough, seemed to strike a shudder through her frame; and it was observed

that during that day she spent much less time with him than usual. But the resistless spell still brought her back, and the very innocence and integrity of her heart was its most entangling snare.

While the captains viewed the friendship between the king and prophetess with unfavouring eyes, it was a subject of continual rejoicing to the soldiery, and strengthened the power of both. They continued their march with unflagging zeal and satisfaction, and it was only retarded by triumphs. The advance was still met by deputations of submitting towns and castles, and enthusiastic villages, until the army entered some distance into the country of Champagne. This province was conquered for England by the earl of Salisbury, and the terror of his name and the vigour of his military provisions survived him.

The towns of Champagne were now, however, chiefly garrisoned by Burgundians, the victories of the Maid having compelled the duke of Bedford to withdraw his forces to places which he thought in greater danger. For, until the expedition to Rheims was actually undertaken, the English imagined they should next be attacked in Paris itself. The French generals had not calculated on the species of inert resistance planned against them. Provisions of every kind had been removed as completely as if by some destroying visitation, and were fast locked in towns too strong or too remote to be attacked. Rapidity of movement was the only strategic they could oppose to this warfare of the stomach; and, lured on by hope and the facility of the way, the host continued its advance until the walls of Troyes arrested it.

This city was garrisoned by a few English, and more than six hundred soldiers of Burgundy, and was known to be of strength to defy, for a long time, the efforts of a powerful army. But the unhesitating assurances of the Maid that they should win it dispelled all doubts on that score. Friar Richard, her confessor, had the liveliest hopes on the subject, which he took care to impart, as his means of acquiring them reflected great honour on himself. Troyes was one of the cities which he had visited in the course of his preaching crusade against the English, and where he had been very well received.

Nevertheless, the easy conquest anticipated was not met with. The garrison showed a bold front from the first, and sallied lustily from their walls to welcome their foes. The French vanguard had hurried forward with too eager a confidence, and met with so sudden and violent a greeting that they were driven back in confusion, and many prisoners were taken before the Maid received intelligence of the disaster. Among these, owing to his too lively expectation of effecting some brilliant service, exclusively, Friar Richard was unfortunately numbered.

Jeanne was riding placidly along with the king, and other leaders, when tidings of the event arrived in the shape of a throng of bleeding fugitives. Charles had now an opportunity of ascertaining, with certainty, by whose agency in reality his affairs were so prosperous. Ere the boldest and readiest captain or knight could propose or attempt any remedy, she had flown like a shaft from the

bow to bear it, followed by the masses which always rushed in the wake of her beloved standard. The Burgundians retired when they perceived the strength pouring against them, and Charles, arriving at full gallop and breathlessly to the side of his championess, found her already engaged in summoning a parley with the town.

The Burgundians were not yet infected with the panic that pervaded the English soldiery, for they had as yet seen none of the wonders of the Maid. They answered the royal summons with disdain and derision, and the result of a long assault convinced even the resolute Jeanne herself that it would be necessary to proceed in a more regular manner.

The plan of the siege was quickly formed, but was slowly executed; and the first shock of ill-success startled the French general into a recollection of the great dangers of their enterprise. Nor had events diminished their original ill-will. The circumstances were, indeed, sufficiently alarming to the naked eye of reason. A strong city and a long siege seemed before them, which would give the time required to rally their enemies in the rear. A great extent of country still remained to be traversed, and several more towns of noted strength—not to mention Rheims itself—were to be subdued. Gien was the nearest fortress on which they could depend for supplies, and they were separated from it by Auxerre, of doubtful neutrality. The want of provisions became hourly more urgent and distressing, and seemed to threaten the host with a famine in the heart of an enemy's country.

Still the captains did not venture to express their sentiments until their discouragement reached the soldiery, and began to show itself in evident signs. For awhile, animated by the exertions of their beloved prophetess, and perceiving that she shared in all their evils and privations, they worked with the most eager zeal at the preparations which, with John of Lorraine, she indefatigably urged on. But the difficulties of the approaches to Troyes delayed their progress unusually, and the ignorant multitude, now accustomed to appear and conquer, grew disheartened and impatient at the delay. The sneers and scorns of their no less unscientific captains, in surveying the labours of the Lorraine engineer, fed, and perhaps created their dissatisfaction. Alarming rumours of an English army collecting on their rear disquieted men's minds. The Marshal de Raix pretended to have positive information on this point. Meanwhile the progress of hunger and want could not be disputed; it was visible in the pale faces, and felt in the gnawing hearts of the host. During the six days the siege had as yet lasted, without any appearance of progress, the only food of the soldiery was a scanty harvest of beans, which the garrison of Troyes had not time to gather in.

Moreover, Jeanne herself seemed to slacken in zeal and impetuosity. Perhaps she was satisfied with the diligence used by John of Lorraine, and saw that it could not be accelerated; or, her fears for the safety of the king induced her, in a manner which was very unusual with her, to keep out of the way of danger. He insisted on

accompanying her wherever she went, declaring he was her pupil in the warlike art. Like the rest of his race, Charles had a personal courage amounting to insensibility; and Jeanne, who dreaded infinitely more for his life than her own, but who dared not confess her reasons, no longer exposed his with hers in points of peril.

Her frequent absences accordingly increased the misgivings and dissatisfaction of the hungry soldiery. The failure even of the coarse esculent on which they had hitherto subsisted finally produced alarming symptoms of mutiny and tumult, and it was agreed among the captains that the time had arrived to urge the necessity of a retreat. Alençon readily undertook the office of spokesman, and, attended by all the rest of the generals, proceeded to the king's quarters.

They found him in his tent with La Trimouille and his usual retinue, and the Maid, who had now become his almost inseparable companion. The young monarch was half reclining on his couch, amusing himself, and apparently his attendants, by singing a ditty of his own composition, to the lute. He had a very sweet and tuneable voice; but the matter of his lay might alone have sufficed to delight the heroic girl, who listened to it as if her ears drank in a strain of paradise, while her flushing cheeks and eyes glistening with joyful tears betrayed the workings of the most passionate feeling. It was a little madrigal in the taste of the times, running something in the following style.

'Twas winter all!
No leaf on any tree.
As seeds beneath the snow,
Was all men's loyalty,
As birds when tempests blow,
Mute Love's own voice to me!
Though all the lands of France
Were mine by heritance,
I had not where to go,
Nor where I could be free,
Save where the grim bear growls
In savage Dauphiny!
'Twas winter all around,
And winter in my soul;
In her frozen fetters bound,
I bent to Despair's control,
By all abandoned, all betrayed,
'Till dawned my spring—my Orleans Maid!

'Twas virgin spring!
And every branch shot green,
The waste seeds sprung and bloomed
'Till all was flowery sheen.
And Love, that seemed entombed,
More lovely to be seen,—
As saints arise from death,
Crowned with the eternal wreath,—
Brighter and purer loomed
Over my desert scene.
Like dark waves at sunrise,
My thoughts grew bright, I ween!

'Twas sweet spring all around,
And sweetest in my soul,
And Despair's coil I unwound
Yielding only to Love's control,
And oh! the form in which he swayed,
Was thine, my spring—my Orleans Maid!

The royal minstrel was evidently startled by the abrupt entry of his generals, and La Trimouille turned pale as if his hour of doom had arrived, and looked despairingly, even at the Maid.

"What, sire—our cold Maid busied herself to be rid of the Lady of Beauty not without a cause! But her new art has spoiled her skill in the old one," said the duke, laughing; but, observing the king's frown, he continued. "Nay, my liege, pardon me; I was ever of jesting humour, and as often out of season as in it, though never more so than now, when I have come in the name of all your peers to tell you we dare no longer prosecute this wild-goose chase to Rheims. Here comes the archbishop, your chancellor, with whom we have spoken, and who will tell you that the sufferings of your faithful soldiery pass endurance, and can no longer be sported withal."

The great ecclesiastic entered as Alençon concluded this harangue, with a cloudy countenance; and, to the surprise of Jeanne, for the first time took part against her project. There was a struggling unwillingness in his manner, but resentment at the public rebuke she had administered to him had more share than he himself suspected in the desponding view which he also took of the state of affairs. It soon appeared that the opinion was unanimous on the necessity of a retreat. Even La Trimouille, who longed to be out of the clutches of his enemies, immediately inclined to a view which promised to effect the object most speedily.

During all the discussion that ensued, Jeanne never once spoke, until the king turned in weariness and amazement to her, and inquired whether she was of the opinion of the rest. "Speak, Jeanne!" he exclaimed with warmth. "For, by my life, I will do as thou advisest me, and by no other wisdom will I be governed!"

"Do you promise this, my liege, on your dear life, which is the life of France?" she replied, suppressing with difficulty the emotion which had kept her silent hitherto. "I thought awhile ago that I had lived long enough when that sealike joy inundated my heart, to hear my king speak of gratitude to a peasant girl. But I am needed still. Hear me, captains of France! When the gracious dauphin undertook this journey, it was not that he depended on the strength of the armed men he took with him, nor on the treasures wherewith he was furnished to pay his host, nor for that the coronation in Rheims appeared to him or to ye a work of easy accomplishment. But he undertook it on the pledge and word of Jeanne the Maid, who promised that he should go on ever gathering in power, like the snow from the hills, until he entered Rheims, and that he should encounter no effectual resistance on the way. And this shall be, because it is the will of God! Therefore, fair dauphin, if you

will remain before your town of Troyes, it shall submit to your obedience within two days, either by force of arms or love; and make no doubt of it!"

"It is not for the matter of a day or two, Jeanne; we would tarry many could we be certain to take Troyes at last," said the archbishop. "But wot you not that the soldiers are starving, and have lost heart, while those of Troyes have bated never a jot of cheer?"

"I know it; and would ye take them from their granary yonder, for the walls of Troyes hold all that has been swept of food from our grasp?" replied Jeanne.

"You talk, madame! But the soldiery say that since you fare so constantly at the king's table you have lost feeling for their hunger!" said the Marshal de Raix.

"I will remove that reproach, messire; for until Troyes is ours, I will taste neither bite nor sup again," replied Jeanne.

"But who has told you the city shall be ours within the space of a mortal fast?" said the archbishop, with a stern and scrutinizing look. "Dost thou pretend that the heavenly voices have spoken to thee, and told thee so?"

"Nay, reverend father," said Jeanne, with some sadness, but with perfect simpleness of honesty—"Not once have they counselled me since we came before Troyes—since the good confessor was captured whom I ought to have preserved from such ill. But John of Lorraine has promised me that his bombards and culverins will be ready to speak the will of Heaven to Troyes, by to-morrow's dawn, in lightning and in thunder!"

"Whatever Jeanne says, I swear!" exclaimed the king, and rising with a peremptory air of dismissal, the captains retired, and had scarcely reached the exterior of the tent ere they heard him resume his madrigal with a playful lightness that sounded like mockery.

The news of Jeanne's intentions spread rapidly through the camp, and every heart revived with the wine of hope. Dawn found the whole host under arms, without any summons; and before any of the captains appeared but Jeanne, all were busied at completing the platforms for the Lorrainer's artillery, as if a single mind and will animated all. The most formidable and extensive preparations were in readiness ere Charles himself came forth, though he made all possible diligence, to the trenches when he heard of the Maid's purpose.

"I have chosen my master in war well from among ye! Deem ye not so yourselves?" he said to the captains assembled, who were gazing in wonder at the terrific battery, raised by John of Lorraine, by which the walls of the city were overlooked and commanded.

"We must not praise the feast till it is cooked, my liege," said the duke of Alençon.

"The game is half cooked that is well trussed;" replied Charles in the same proverbial style. And with reason. Troyes surrendered without a single discharge of this formidable artillery. The hearts of the people were in reality well inclined to return to their natural allegiance, and the captive friar had spread such tidings of the Maid of Orleans as communicated the English panic to the Burgundian

soldiery. It was thus that he rewarded them for the hospitality forced upon him so much against his will. His name and character were already known and revered among the populace, most of whom remembered that in a sermon preached by him in the Christmas of the same year, he very judiciously advised them to set beans, as they might be wanted for food by some poor people who would come that way in the course of a year. This was the nearest approach he had dared to make to a prophecy in favour of Charles VII., but it was now remembered, to his honour, as one of undoubted inspiration.

The extraordinary aspect of the Lorrainer's battery, the eagerness and enthusiasm that seemed to animate their assailants, infused still deeper consternation. The effect was completed by a singular circumstance. It was a glowing noonday of July when the preparations of assault were matured; and it chanced that an extraordinary quantity of white butterflies were attracted by the glisten of Jeanne's standard, and fluttered round it. The Burgundians on the walls were dismayed with a fancy that those innocent insects were angels appointed to do the Maid's will in disguise, and themselves proposed to the citizens to treat. Accordingly, before a gun was discharged, a signal was made, and the bishop, captains, and burgesses of Troyes came forth, with one accord, to treat of surrender.

The terms were easy, for the captains of the French host were too much rejoiced and in need of success to hazard it by dispute. Jeanne rarely interfered after victory was assured; and as she detested bloodshed whenever it could be avoided, she heard with satisfaction that the Burgundians were to be permitted to evacuate the town, and go whither they pleased. But she had by no means agreed to another of the conditions, too hastily granted by the king's councillors. She learned, by the actual spectacle of Friar Richard shamefully dragged along at the stirrups of the captain of the garrison, that the Burgundians were permitted to march off with their plunder and prisoners. The poor confessor himself, perceiving his heroic penitent, appealed to her protection in the most moving and bewildered terms, protesting that the Burgundians were dragging him away to burn him for a sorcerer, because he had belonged to her.

Troubling herself extremely little about the nice observance of the etiquette of war, Jeanne instantly rescued the friar from his uncomfortable captivity. Then declaring aloud that she would suffer no Frenchman, who had accompanied her on the expedition, to be led away a prisoner, the soldiery so heartily seconded her, that the Burgundians themselves in terror relinquished their captives. The denial of the French generals that they had any share in the violation of the articles, and the laughing promises of the king that he would pay the ransoms for the rescued, in Paris, was all the satisfaction the garrison of Troyes ever received for their losses.

CHAPTER XXIV.

RHEIMS.

Constance.—" O, fair return of banished majesty!"
Elinor.—" O, foul revolt of French inconstancy!"—*King John.*

The brief resistance of Troyes was the last difficulty encountered on the march to Rheims. Terror or wonder preceded the farther progress of the army, like the pillar of fire before the Israelites in the desert, and subdued the souls of men. The powerful city of Chalons sent its keys long ere its defenders could catch a glimpse of the oriflamme, which, as on a sacred war, was borne with the host of Charles VII. Finally, nothing remained between his victorious legions and the great object of the journey, Rheims, but a short day's march.

So far, this city continued in the hands of the English and Burgundians, commanded by captains renowned in war. The marshal of l'Isle Adam, Hector de Saveuse, and the Lord de Chatillon, held Rheims on behalf of England. But the prodigies that accompanied the approach of Charles, the celestial mission announced and asserted by achievements so marvellous, of her who came with him, exercised an astonishing influence on the inhabitants of that religious city. Rheims itself boasted a kind of mystic and supernatural dignity, confirmed by miracles and extraordinary legends, from a remote antiquity. Symptoms of revolt grew hourly more apparent and menacing to the English captains, and at the same time their soldiery were evidently infected by the panic fear of the Maid of Orleans, now become almost universal among the enemies of France.

But when tidings of the submission of Troyes and Chalons arrived—when a letter signed by the king, the Maid, and the archbishop of Rheims, conceived in the loving and tender tones of a parent adjuring his erring children to return to their duty, was posted up on the gates of the cathedral (no one knew how but Friar Richard and a wandering brother of his order), the effervescence became too mighty to be resisted. The Lord de l'Isle Adam and his compeers were obliged to evacuate the city to avoid the explosion which was certain the instant that the appearance of the French host should communicate the necessary spark.

Charles had arrived at a castle about a league from Rheims, belonging to the archbishopric, when he received a deputation from the city, inviting him, in terms of the most enthusiastic delight, to come and take possession of it.

It was determined that the archbishop, Regnault, as duke and

seigneur of the city, should have the honour of preceding the king and making the most rapid preparations possible for the coronation. It was Friday; and as the kings of France were usually crowned on Sunday, and no time could be wasted, it was resolved that the grand ceremony, which confirmed him sovereign, should be performed within two days.

Regnault de Chartres had enjoyed his dignity titularly for many years, but this was his first visit, as archbishop, to the metropolis of the French church. He was received with every mark of respect and welcome by the citizens, and conducted, amidst the joyful acclamations of the people, to the archiepiscopal palace. It seemed to him like a dream, when, after the glad tumult of his reception had subsided, he found himself enjoying a few instants of breathing time, in a magnificent chamber of his predecessors' ancient residence. The sight of Friar Richard, who alone remained with him, by command, satisfied the prelate that he was awake, by recalling the means that had effected these marvels.

"Laudamus Deum! we have accomplished the work with the sword of Gideon!" said the cordelier, with gasping delight.

"And Sampson's weapon, too, Richard!" said the archbishop, slightly indicating the friar's jaw, but adding with gravity, and even gloom, "This wonderful woman has accomplished it all, and we have been but Heaven's instruments in directing her supernatural impulses! And now the gratitude we must show her—that which methinks is suggested to me by the same inspiration—is to remove her for ever from the dangers that more certainly environ her success than her toils."

"It is most true, my lord, the English will most certainly burn her for a witch if they catch her!" exclaimed the friar. "They were going to burn me—me, a brother of the thrice-blessed St. Francis—as a sorceress's familiar, if she had not interfered in time. It is like enough that some ill chance will befall her; for these men of the sword are even mad with jealousy that the church and the saints and a woman should have all the glory of preserving France."

"Other and worse dangers threaten her, poor girl, and the honour of the church through hers!" said the archbishop, with emotion. "I can no longer conceal from myself that our falcon royal has fixed an eye of carnal liking on this wild bird of the woods. He is young, and of seductive beauty and tenderness. It is not in woman—not even in this woman—to resist these qualities in a king! Moreover, it is plain, Richard, to all but herself, that she loves him. A perpetual shame and doubt on the faithfullest miracles of the church would it bring, if this, the last and brightest, should burn into so foul a socket. This scandal it behoves us by all means to prevent. We must set thine ingenuity once more to work."

"My lord, I must needs confess that I am heartily tired and affrighted of my task," replied the cordelier, peevishly. "Your grace promised that in Rheims I should be released from a labour beyond mine ability; for I am as the magician's scholar who set in motion a machine so vast that himself was most terrified of all that witnessed

its powers in activity. I was promised a little rest in Rheims and handsome rewards for myself and the brethren who have so assiduously and secretly laboured with me in the cause."

"Doubt not thy reward. We will turn out sufficient of the usurping canons from our chapter within an hour to reward thy brethren," said the archbishop. "And for thyself?—It is well known to all men by our incessant complaints, and to the holy see by our protest, that the grand priorate of St. Remy has been unlawfully conferred on Gilles de Cauchon, half-brother to our suffragan of Beauvais. To-morrow shalt thou to the abbey with those who go to seek the holy vial, for the coronation, with my collation in thine hands, and five hundred spears at thy back, to expel ignominiously the said Gilles de Cauchon, and seat thyself in his place. Will that content thee? And the last recompense I demand is but that the voice of Michael may warn our Maid, on the vigil of the coronation, that her mission is accomplished; that it is fit she retire from camps and courts with the rewards she has merited, to edify France with the spectacle of a saint so glorious in an age so degenerate, leading the life of the purest of antiquity, without suffering martyrdom like them."

"The priorate of St. Remy;—it is but another step to the mitred abbacy of the same!" said the cordelier, with the liveliest satisfaction. "My lord, she shall be spinning at home in her village, or minding sheep under the green forest shadows, as she is always sighing to do, within a week! I will tell her—and in faith I believe it—that if she stays, she will as certainly be broiled by the English as the Flemings stew crabs for a meal."

At the very same time, in which this plan of dismissing Jeanne was matured between the archbishop of Rheims and his satellite, La Trimouille was exhausting his skill in a secret consultation with the king, to point out the advantages of retaining her. The timorous and shifting minister was now completely dazzled by the splendour of Jeanne's successes, and had fallen in consequence on a new train of projects with regard to her. He took the opportunity of a fresh piece of good fortune which she had doubtless brought the king, in the proffered allegiance sent by the powerful duke of Lorraine and Bar, to lay open his ideas. In extreme delight at the news of the duke's intention of attending at his coronation, Charles had inquired of his minister, what sufficient reward they could possibly devise for the heroic cause of their good fortune.

"There is only one reward, my royal lord, which she will deem such!" replied the crafty minister. "Yet the granting of it will in nowise impoverish us, but rather will give us a perpetual security and sway over these turbulent soldiers. Yea, 'tis a gift whereof your greatness has often been lavish with much less reason—your love!"

The young king himself blushed deeply; but he answered with a smile of evident pleasure and flattered vanity. "Deem you so, count? for we intend the fief of Boulogne to be yours, so completely that we may well anticipate our chancellor's seal by a few hours!

Nay, but of late—when we have ventured to offer warmer caresses which gratitude might justify—she shuns us! Mark you not how ever since we embraced her in Troyes, the freedom and delight of her manner are gone; and she is rarely with us save when the other captains come to weary us with their iron talk?"

"Your salute was something too passionate before so many gazers, and perchance startled her into suspicion of what it is that, I am assured, works of late in her maiden bosom, like a smothered fire the householder himself wots not of," replied La Trimouille, "Her bashfulness is but the more certain sign of your triumph."

"It were glorious, indeed, to be loved by so noble a heart!" said Charles, with a sigh. "But what will the Lady of Beauty think of it; and may not Jeanne herself rather deem it dishonour than happiness to be loved by the husband of Mary d'Anjou?"

"Dishonour! the love of a king dishonour a peasant!" replied the count of Boulogne, with an incredulous laugh. "And trust me, sire, Jeanne, like any other woman, will see in you, not the husband of the queen, but the man she loves! Nay, I am in much doubt whether she did not, knowingly, rid herself of a rival in Agnes—for who can tell how deep clear waters are, by their seeming?—And what fitter oblation to the wounded pride of the Lady of Beauty can your grace offer, than the spectacle of the severe humiliator herself bending to the same shrine of love and pleasure—becoming what she shamed and scorned so cruelly in another?"

With this glimpse of the means he purposed to employ, La Trimouille proceeded to expound the policy he based on them. The most ardent believer of the populace could not entertain a more enthusiastic confidence in Jeanne's powers than now possessed the favourite minister. He imagined that nothing could resist her, and had formed the notion that by her means he could free himself and the king from the dangers and thraldom which beset them in the hands of the great nobles. He believed that she had only to advance with them on Paris, to obtain the same success as hitherto—to roll the whole forces of France irresistibly on the enemy, and finally expel the English from France. There would then no longer be a necessity of an assembled host, commanded by disaffected men; no dread nor heed of the Constable; and in the delightful capital of France, they might rule in tranquillity over all its territories. The only thing necessary was to secure Jeanne d'Arc devotedly to their will, and that might certainly be effected by the influence of a kingly lover.

True it was that a singular change had of late come over the conduct of Jeanne d'Arc. She seemed to grow more shadowy and sad in the increasing blaze of her favour than in the darkest hour of the dissatisfaction she had formerly provoked at court. The caresses with which the young monarch overwhelmed her, apparently embarrassed and distressed her. She avoided his presence as much as possible, alleging that the soldiers laboured without zeal when she was absent from their sight, or did not set them the example of energy and perseverance. She resumed her old habit of sleeping in her armour under the skies in the fields, surrounded by monks and

the devoted cannoneers of John of Lorraine. She hurried on the march with a restless eagerness, and seemed tranquil only when it was advancing with rapidity. In the hours of pause or repose, some fever that flamed in her blood seemed to exercise its most devouring sway. It was observed that she slept less now than ever, when there was no longer much occasion for vigilance; and her sweat-bathed chargers attested to her grooms wild and mysterious excursions from the camp by night.

Melancholy and musing became the dominant moods of that once cloudless and glory-bathing spirit. Her reveries were no longer the magnificent dreams of an inspired though silent poesy. The fiend of passion had entered the Eden of her imagination, and the subtle whisperings of the tempter—the glide of his beautiful serpent gleam among the gorgeous flowers of love and fame—marred all the perfume and sweetness of that visionary world. Every hour of the approach to Rheims seemed to add a new violence and whirl to the tempest in her heart, and there was such a mingling of joy and despair in the gaze she fixed on the first rise of its towers on the plain, that none could tell whether she beheld in it an ark of redemption, or a rock of ruin.

The archbishop, meanwhile, displayed the most extraordinary and untiring energy in completing the preparations intrusted to him. There was something miraculous in the very rapidity with which the coronation ceremonial was arranged, usually the toil and anxiety of months, to practised officials. But the whole people of Rheims assisted with as much zeal as if they had been created for no other purpose than to prepare the coronation of Charles VII. A marvellous influx of strangers astonished the citizens, who could scarcely imagine by what magic, in so brief a period, the news of their surrender and intentions became circulated in the neighbouring countries. The instinct of all classes had apparently foreseen the events, for representatives of all seemed only to have awaited the opening of the gates to flood Rheims like an inundation.

One certain sign of the times appeared in the arrival of the duke of Lorraine and Bar, attended by a little army, to proffer his aid and allegiance to Charles. This great peer had hitherto kept cautiously aloof from the quarrel that devastated France, and his adhesion to the cause of the house of Valois was a portent of infinite significance.

In special compliment to the prince, the citizens of Rheims intreated him to head their procession when, on the day of the coronation, they went forth to welcome their victorious sovereign. Nearly the entire population of the city followed in the train of the burgesses and the soldiers of the duke of Lorraine, the former in festal array. But great as was the interest naturally excited by the prospect of beholding for the first time their handsome and popular-mannered king, it was only secondary in the desires of the multitude. To see a woman whom their imaginations exalted into a celestial being, still radiant with the splendours of her native heaven, was the all-absorbing object of curiosity and expectation.

Both wishes might, however, be gratified together. Charles and

his young redemptress approached the city riding abreast, both in complete armour save their helmets, and both answering the most brilliant fancies of the gazers. The descendant of their kings appeared to them all they had anticipated, for joy and triumph and love united to embellish his handsome and winning features, and the grandeur of the event roused him from his habitual *nonchalance* to display an equal majesty of kingliness. And there was in the countenance and demeanour of Jeanne d'Arc so sublime an expression of rapt and ecstatic triumph that the deep sadness which at the same time possessed it only added to its unearthly solemnity and beauty.

The great gate of Rheims was decorated with banners, garlands, and painted devices of extraordinary gaiety and splendour, considering the brief period allowed for preparation. At some distance beyond it a mass of kneeling burgesses awaited the king's approach, with the three silver keys of their city on a cushion of cloth-of-gold. The duke of Lorraine himself,—in a suit of silver damask, being too judicious to wear armour on so hot a day,—rode a little in advance of this group, and offered them to Charles in a flowery harangue, wherein he paraded his own good intentions as well as the devotion of the burghers of Rheims. He was that René d'Anjou, known to the smiles of posterity as the troubadour king of Sicily, and to their tears, as the father of Margaret, queen of Henry VI. of England.

"We are infinitely bound to our loving citizens and to our dear brother of Lorraine for their good-will," said Charles. "But we know so well from whom we truly receive these keys, that we would all the world should visibly discern our thought, and pray you, therefore, good duke, to hand them to the Maid, that she may hand them to us!"

Jeanne started from a species of reverie when the complying René jingled the keys before her, exclaiming, "Heroic shepherdess, though in little resembling one, will it please you to obey the king's pleasure?"

"I trust it shall, my glorious one!" murmured Charles, in a low, sweet enamoured voice, to Jeanne, as she mechanically obeyed; and a deep tint visited the sunburned hues of her complexion. Henceforth it became the custom for kings who came to Rheims to be crowned, to receive the keys from a young girl.

"Sire, Heaven gives you these keys by my hand!" said Jeanne, shuddering back from the lips which whispered almost on hers.

The great gate of Rheims was now thrown open, and the procession continued its advance. The long street which stretched from it to the cathedral appeared lined with archers, knights, and men-at-arms,—an unnecessary precaution, unless against the pressure of the extraordinary multitude, for the loyal enthusiasm of the people was too apparently indicated to be doubted. The whole line of march was covered with various-coloured silks that shed a rainbow glare on the scene, and showed, in strangely-brilliant hues, the arches of flowers and innumerable banners which crossed from house to house. The richly-carved wooden-work of the balconies and emblazoned bas-reliefs of these dwellings belonging to the richest burgesses, and towering

in storeys one above the other, until they almost met at the roofs, were brought into magnificent display by the glimpses of light that entered at the junctions of the canopy. The windows were crowded with spectators in the gayest garbs, who showered perfumes on the passing soldiery and echoed the acclamations of the crowded multitudes below, until almost out of hearing.

The enthusiasm of the people for the triumphant emissary of Heaven even took an idolatrous form. Many pious ladies of high rank, and a great number of the populace, carried wax torches, rudely painted with some resemblance of the Maid, which they burned in her honour as if to some visible angel or saint. The four orders of mendicant friars themselves, whose privilege it was to occupy the corners of the street where it debouched into the square of the cathedral, carried blazing torches as if to receive some most holy relic. A brother of the tribe had taken so distinguished a part in her triumphs, that it was almost a compliment they paid to themselves. The effect of this illumination in the blaze of daylight was so singular and yet powerless, that Jeanne seemed affected by some inexplicable association of ideas, and her sadness deepened amidst the wild uproar of joy and triumph that saluted her. "Noël! noël! Vive le Roi! Vive la Pucelle!" rent the air like an earthquake, without seeming to rouse her to share the exultation which even her snorting and pawing charger evinced.

"What ails thee, Jeanne? Why lookest thou so sad?" said Charles, with an expression of happiness and tenderness that troubled her, though he spoke audibly only to her amidst the exultant uproar.

"It is a good people, and I have seen none so glad of the coming of my glorious dauphin!" replied Jeanne; "and therefore it bethought me, if I might not rest in mine own peaceful village of Domremy, I could be well content to be buried among them when I lay down this weary casement of mortality!"

"Wherever thou art buried, knowest thou where thou shalt die?" returned the young monarch, passionately. "In my arms—in the arms of the king, my bright deliverer! if my blest soul have not previously exhaled itself in thine!"

"I shall die where it pleases God!" said Jeanne, turning away with a convulsive shudder, and a glance of unutterable sadness and love. "Would it were even now, in this hour of my glory and last of my happiness! But not there, not there, sweet dauphin! I must leave thee, when thou art my king, for ever! The voices of the night have spoken; I must depart and leave thee for ever!"

"What! Shall the sun of Charles set at noonday? for thou art mine!" said the king, with great eagerness. "Wilt thou desert me, maiden, now that thou hast brought me hither so far from human counsel and aid—now when my heart needs thy consoling presence most!"

"The voices have commanded!" replied Jeanne, hurriedly. "My mission is fulfilled in Rheims! Nought but ruin and death, and, O sweet mother of God! much worse; but shame and guilt, perchance, await my longer tarriance!"

Charles was about to make a more vehement protest against this abandonment, when a very human voice shouted, "Noël, noël!" in such shrill chanticleer tones close at hand, that he checked both his voice and his steed. Jeanne halted too as it seemed by sympathy, and her glance falling on the acclaimer, who was pushing his way among the men-at-arms, she recognized, with a wild shock of opposing thoughts, Durand Laxart!

"Give me way! I am her uncle, her relation, her kinsman, her father's sister's husband!" said Durand, by a resolute push baffling the attempts of the guard to keep him back. "Noël, noël! and a million times noël! I am he who took her to Vaucouleurs. She will not disavow her poor uncle. Vive le Roi! Vive la Pucelle!" And Durand Laxart threw himself on both his knees before his niece's charger, out of breath, panting, red as fire, and frightened with the very presence into which he had thrust himself—but victorious.

"Thou liest, caitiff; our Maid came from heaven direct, and had neither father nor mother, nor uncle nor cousin, first, second, or third!" said the duke of Alençon, laughing scornfully.

"It is thou that liest, haughty duke!" returned the impetuous championess; "I have all these, or hope to God and our Lady I have; and this is my uncle, Durand Laxart."

"She owns me, she owns me! Oh, the foolish curate of Domremy, to say she would be like other beggars on horseback, and know no poor folks!" said Durand, joyfully clapping his hands.

"Her uncle!" muttered Dunois within his vizor. "And I inherit the blood of France!" And a half-formed thought and passionate wish died away awhile in his breast as he gazed on the vassal kinsman of Jeanne d'Arc.

"If thou art akin to the Maid but one move nearer than Adam, thou art very welcome, companion," said the king, smilingly.

"Vive le Roi! Your royal majesty heard her acknowledge me; she cannot deny me now," said Durand, ecstatically. "Dear niece, you remember very well how obediently and kindly and like a good uncle, I went with you to Sir Robert de Baudricourt, and how I always predicted this happy day, and how I thought I might without offence come to feast my eyes with the sight, if I get nothing else for all my services."

Jeanne pressed her hand a little wildly to her brow, and then said in a faltering tone, "Uncle, you are welcome. But are you here alone? Is no one else? Are all well at home? My father, is he here?"

"Tut, never speak of him; the foolish old man perseveres in his folly, and persists thou art a sorceress who will soon come to an ill end, and bring down with thee all that trust in thee, please his royal lordship the king," replied Durand, with an air of superior enlightenment. "But the truth is, he has never forgiven thee for the blows and robberies Franquet d'Arras inflicted upon us, all on thy account. Pardon me, madam, for thee-and-thou-ing it, but I cannot forget you were once my poor little niece, Jeannette!"

"My sister and brothers, sent they no kindly greetings—no word of old remembrance?"

"Marry, they dare not for fear of incurring a cross old man's curse as thou hast, Jeanne, but they bade me whisper thee they would be with thee, by hook or by crook, happen what might, when thou art safely back again from Champagne," replied Durand.

"No, no; tell them no, no, from me! Let them stay where they are and be happy! But sent he never a word to me, my father, that loved me once so well? I was his youngest born!" said Jeanne.

"My lord the king may judge what kind of a crusty old churl he is, when I tell thee, Jeanne, that he bade me tell thee, if thou wouldst not compel his curse to fulfil itself, to turn from thy magic and evil ways, and come home again," replied Durand. "I can compare him to nothing but an old clucking hen that sees her ducklings take water, and flutters distractedly about the pool because *she* cannot swim."

"Home again? I will, I will! I will return home again," said Jeanne, hurriedly. "The voice of Heaven and of my father alike recall me! Come to me after the coronation of the noble dauphin, Durand—my mission will then be fulfilled—and even as thou boastest thou hast brought me forth on this too vast enterprise, so shalt thou take me home again, a wandering lamb to the fold, found at nightfall by the shepherd! As poor and lowly—nay, more poor and humble of heart—will I return to my father's roof, than I left it. And will not my sire believe that I went not forth on the service of the fiend, when I return without his hire?"

"Is thy father a Burgundian or a madman?" said Charles, with some displeasure. "But without rewards—though not great as thy deservings, Jeanne! we will not part if we part ever. Thy village shall be recompensed; and all thy kith and kin share in thy recompense. Henceforth, Domremy is free from all tax and due to us and our successors, for ever! Thou, too, good knave!—but come to us, as the Maid hath said, and we will dismiss thee with such tidings to her churlish sire as shall content him and all of ye."

"I will come, my sovereign lord, to your bidding, though the whole English host said me nay, that remain alive," said the valorous Durand, with enthusiastic selfishness; and the king smiling, and waving his hand impatiently, moved on with a gesture that set Jeanne's steed also prancing forward.

"Of course I will come—invited by the king himself—to a royal palace! Durand Laxart, has it come to this?" exclaimed the uncle of Jeanne d'Arc, gazing after her in incredulous wonder. "Good people, tell me, am I thoroughly awake?—What an excellent thing it is we did not shut her up for a madwoman, as De Baudricourt advised us! When, in that case, should I have been invited to a royal palace, to take my fill, no doubt, of the best, and be paid for my trouble? Let us give thanks to God and his Blessed Mother, and enjoy ourselves, for this is the finest day that ever dawned in France!" And bursting into a Christmas carol, and dancing like a madman amidst the crowd, Durand followed the advance of the procession.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CORONATION OF CHARLES VII.

"Like light and lightning mingled!"—*The Revolt of Flanders.*

THE warlike escort of Charles VII. now filled up the entire line of vay, in glittering masses of spears and banners. The king and his mmediate retinue had halted before the grand portal of the cathedral hurch of our Lady of Rheims. There Charles alighted with Jeanne l'Arc, and the principal personages accompanying him. The portals lew open at his approach, and the archbishop appeared in readiness o receive him, attired in the magnificent robes of his dignity, at- ended by six personages who represented the ecclesiastical peers of France, and all the canons of the cathedral—most of them new ones —in their copes of cloth-of-gold.

Some of these immediately advanced with a canopy of the same orgeous stuff, embroidered with the arms of France, and a cushion f purple velvet, sown with fleur-de-lys. Beneath and upon these preparations the king knelt in the porch, and in a short but probably ery sincere and heartfelt prayer, returned thanks for his safe arrival n the city, through so many dangers. His armed chivalry did the ike, while the choir within burst into a grand anthem of immemorial isage, and the archbishop covered all near enough with a shower of ragrant holy water. Those who expected that Jeanne d'Arc would lisplay the most outward signs of devotion were surprised, on the ontrary, to observe that she continued standing, with a melancholy nd almost absent look, during the whole ceremonial of this reception.

A prodigious manuscript of the gospels, bound and clasped in gold iligree work, was now borne with difficulty to the royal presence, by our servitors of the cathedral. According to a custom old as the resentation of the books of the law by St. Remy to Clovis, this plendid tome was offered, with a suitable address, to the king, calling pon him to maintain the faith therein contained, by Archbishop Regnault. By another observance of equal antiquity, the canons ffered bread and wine to the monarch, in a golden plate and goblet, f which he slightly partook. The archbishop and his clergy then e-formed in procession, and with their crosses and relics glistering n a long file, and solemnly chanting, marshalled the entry of the oyal visitant into the cathedral.

Charles immediately prepared to follow, but as he stepped forward e observed Jeanne totter as if she needed support. He took her and with a gentle pressure, put it in his arm, and advanced; and the ook which she raised to him, of gratitude and tenderness and despair, mote him to the heart. And yet he exulted in the conviction that

even her heroic spirit felt profoundly, in this supreme hour of triumph and glory, the great want of her sex, the need for protection and love.

The ceremonial observed through so many ages in the coronation of the kings of France was observed as much as possible to the letter in that of the restored heir of the monarchy of Clovis. The archbishop had already ascended the steps of the altar, and awaited his arrival there, where he was to seat himself in all humility and reverence before his only superior, the divine essence, represented by the church on earth. But reproof and sadness appeared in the look of Regnault de Chartres, when he beheld the king and the Maid approach thus unitedly. Yet at the same instant the magnificent strains of a *Te Deum* flooded the whole cathedral with harmony, and the archbishop was amazed to observe the effect which it produced on Jeanne. Her eye had quailed beneath the rebuke in his own; but suddenly it re-animated; her whole frame became instinct and beaming with the might of some grand thought. Stately, firm, and unflinching with one foot on the lowest step of the altar, she paused to let the king ascend it alone, and lowering her standard, which she continued to bear, and her own martial head in homage, she seemed like a statue of glory dedicating its laurels to religion.

At the conclusion of the *Te Deum*, the king again arose, and kneeled to be made a knight by the duke of Alençon, and the sword of the constable of France was demanded in a loud voice, by heralds, for the purpose. And now an artful stroke of ingenious malice, intended more completely to embroil the Maid with that haughty leader, was played off by La Trimouille. He announced that Jeanne d'Arc most worthily represented the constable in the solemnity, and drawing her sword himself, handed it to the duke. Alençon could not refuse to accept it, but he performed the ceremony with a very ill grace, and even laid the sword so heavily on the king's shoulder that he exclaimed, half jestingly, "It hurts us as if it were really De Richemont's own sword, instead of our faithful Maid's!"

After receiving this somewhat painful honour, and having the golden spurs of knighthood put on, which, king as he was, Charles had never yet assumed, he was led to a throne set in readiness on the right hand of the grand altar. The great nobles, who represented the six lay peers of France, being the dukes of Alençon, Lorraine and Bourbon, La Trimouille, Dunois, and the count of Clermont, for the dukes of Burgundy, Normandy, and Aquitaine, and the counts of Thoulouse, Flanders, and Champagne, followed the king. A bench of purple velvet was assigned to them close behind the throne: and La Trimouille, affably pointing to a chair but one degree below it, informed his victim that it was the place assigned for the representative of the constable of France.

Simultaneously with this movement a flourish of trumpets, and the acclamations of the people on the exterior, announced the arrival of the miraculous oil of St. Remy. During more than a thousand years the phial brought by a dove from heaven to St. Remy, for the anointment of the first Christian king of France, had never failed in its supply of the sacred fluid necessary to consecrate his successors.

It now appeared that the monks of St. Remy understood reason when it came to them in the shape of lance and sword. The usurping prior fled at the approach of the elect of archbishop Regnault, and the monks chose friar Richard in his room, without remonstrance. And to this prior of a day's creation, and the four marshals of France who accompanied him, was now confided the most precious treasure of the convent—the phial containing the sacred oil of the dove.

Jeanne herself scarcely knew her confessor when he entered in full-blown dignity, resplendent in alb and stole of cloth-of-gold, with a little, but most elaborately ornamented, chapel of gold in his arms, under a canopy of scarlet velvet, borne by the four marshals. The archbishop himself could not forbear smiling at the inflated look of dignity wherewith the new prior of St. Remy resigned his precious charge to his cares. The usual promise to return it faithfully was even demanded with a degree of pomp and haughtiness that made Regnault de Chartres almost sorry he had transformed a begging friar into a prelate.

The king and all the lords rose respectfully as the miraculous phial was borne past in its chapel to the altar, and Jeanne now clasped her hands with an expression of eager and impassioned devotion. The magnificent chant of *Veni Creator* that accompanied its progress might well inspire that grand and visionary imagination with the conviction of some celestial presence, even had the oil of the dove been less a subject of popular credulity.

After the safe deposit of the golden chapel, the archbishop addressed the usual solemn request to the king, to protect the churches of France, placed beneath the guard of his temporal sword. Charles returned the wonted promise to that effect; and the most important plight, in the opinion of the church, being thus received, the prelate turned with a grandeur of manner suitable to the occasion, and inquired in a loud voice of the people whether they accepted Charles of Valois, seventh of the name, for their king?

Instead of the "respectful silence" which the formulas of future despotism prescribed, the cathedral of our lady of Rheims shook to its deepest vaults and its loftiest carvings with the unanimous shout of "We do,—we do! Vive le roi!" The tumult of joy and excitement was long in subsiding. It seemed like an old Frankish coronation of the forests, in which Jeanne well represented some inspired Druidic prophetess, giving the signal to a wild and free nation to elevate its monarch on a throne of shields!

The great volume of the gospels was then brought to the king, and on these he took his oath of the realm, as it was called, which had not yet become an unmeaning ceremony. The royal robes, no longer the dusty, worm-eaten mantle of Chinon, but a superb mass of purple velvet and snowy ermine, were meanwhile placed on the altar. And now the moment that was to verify an additional miracle came, and the people pressed forward with anxiety to observe whether the regalia of Charlemagne, known to be in the hands of the English, would in reality be forthcoming. And behold indeed the treasurers of the cathedral entered, staggering under the massive iron chest,

containing those priceless relics! The imperial crown of Charlemagne, his sword, and sceptre, and rod of justice, blazing with precious gems, were laid in due order on the altar,—the marvellous crown of the angel of Bourges!

Regnault de Chartres now took his archiepiscopal throne, directly opposite to that of the king, and the two ecclesiastics who enacted the bishops of Laon and Beauvais, were sent to bring Charles before him. The latter of the two simulated dignitaries could not be denied this honour, according to ancient usage, though much to the discontent of the archbishop, who hated even the name of his insulting enemy.

Attended by the representatives of the peers of France, and his female constable, Charles was led by the bishops to the archbishop's throne. The three prelates then unfastened and removed his mantle of cloth-of-silver, and he appeared in an unusual coronation-dress, but one very significant of the means which had brought him to receive the honour—in bright armour. The graceful beauty of the young king's person appeared to advantage in the close suit of steel which he wore, and a murmur of admiration arose among the female spectators. He seated himself, too, in a chair brought for the purpose, with so natural a gesture of ease and pleasure, that the people, who think it a condescension in their masters to be human, were pleased as if with some illustrious deed.

The blessing of the regalia, amidst a pompous chant, ensued, and the archbishop, raising the vast weapon which was esteemed to be the famous sword, Joyeuse, of Charlemagne, handed it to the king in its sheath. Charles kissed and laid it reverently in dedication on the altar. The archbishop then drew it, and again handed it to the king. This time Charles received it kneeling, and kissing it again, and much more tenderly, he presented the hilt with a pleasing smile to Jeanne d'Arc. At this moment there seemed nothing incongruous or degrading in the reversed position which, as man and woman, the king and his protectress filled. There was almost a feminine tenderness and trust in his eyes—and in hers, a wild and martial fire; but the whole scene partook so strongly of the supernatural and romantic that the routines of thought were no longer applied even in the most commonplace spectators.

It was now time for the miraculous oil to be used; and after a long ceremonial of prayer and of genuflections, the golden chapel of St Remy was unlocked. The sacred phial, of richly-chased silver, and evidently of great antiquity, appeared within its recess. Prior Richard was about to hand it forth, according to his undoubted right and privilege, when the king interposed. "Let Jeanne anoint me with the oil of the dove! She is holy as any priest—and thus shall the miracle that sanctified Clovis be again repeated," said Charles, and, with some slight but visible dissatisfaction, the archbishop complied.

The duke of Alençon unclasped the king's armour, at the breast and throat, and bared his fair and shapely neck, shaded by rich clustering locks of chestnut brown. Jeanne d'Arc complied with the royal will, though not without hesitation, after an angry signal from the

archbishop, who yet wished to prevent any public scandal. But like a true warrior she confided the sword intrusted to her to none else, and held it firmly clasped under her arm while she performed the anointment. But it was observed that her fingers quivered whenever in the discharge of the office they touched the king's person, while he continued to gaze at her smilingly. It may be imagined that the miraculous oil, of which for so many ages there had been no deficiency failed not on this occasion. Nay, there was a profusion of it; for, lest any possible doubt might arise on the authentic performance of the coronation rites, the archbishop repeated the anointing after Jeanne drew back.

But few ceremonies now remained to complete the great act of consecrating a king to France. The royal robes were placed on Charles's shoulders; the gloves, the ring, the sceptre, and the sword of justice, were severally handed to him. Jeanne watched the progress of the work which was to place so magnificent an end to her toils, with intense and devouring anxiety; and yet, at the moment when the crown of Charlemagne was set on her sovereign's fair brows, a pang of intolerable anguish shot through her heart, and for an instant the whole gorgeous spectacle vanished from her sight, and she seemed to stand alone upon some drear promontory of darkness surrounded by raging and thronging waves of flame! She awoke from this terrific dream or prophecy with a start; the beloved tones of Charles were in her ears and heart, uttering the joyous words, "Lead me to my throne, Jeanne! Thou alone hast the right!"

Nothing indeed now remained to be performed but the last august rite of the enthronization; and with a mighty effort of mind and will, Jeanne complied. She walked beside the king to the steps of his throne with the tremulous march of a woman rather than of a warrior; but as she approached it, she seemed to regain strength and determination. And when Charles ascended to the chair and sank into it with an air of mingled exhaustion and pleasure; when the archbishop in a loud voice shouted, *Vivat rex in æternum!* and the people responded with an overwhelming sea-like roar, wherein *Vive le Roi!* and *Vive la Pucelle!* seemed to be joined as one sound; when the trumpets burst into their scarlet clangs of triumph, and the great choir and organs of Rheims thundered forth the *Gloria in Excelsis*—the magnificent sentiment in her heart, the agony of joy and woe, of triumph and despair, vented itself in the frenzied exultation with which she flourished her victorious standard over the king, while torrents of tears and stifling sobs burst from her eyes and breast.

Yet it was in this very highest and most transcendent moment of triumph and glory, that the Maid seemed suddenly to check the tide of her tempestuous feelings, and letting her standard sink, she threw herself on both knees at the lowest step of the throne.

"Be silent, all!" said Charles, for the first time stretching his sceptre, and with so royal a majesty that he was instantly obeyed. "Be silent while we hear, as we trust, what reward the Maid will deign to ask of us. For ourselves, we are hopeless to devise any equal to her deservings."

"King!—my royal and gentle king! whom for the first time I call so," replied Jeanne, and she paused an instant ere resuming her speech with a new flood of tears; "now is fulfilled the pleasure of God, who willed that I should raise the siege of Orleans, and should bring you into this city of Rheims to receive your glorious consecration, and show to all the world, by the divine aid afforded you, maugre the power and calumnies of your enemies—ah, sweet king, of your wolf-mother herself!—that you are the true king, and he to whom the realm of France by right belongs. And now my task is fulfilled; my work is over; my heavenly powers are withdrawn. Henceforth I am a mere woman—a very weak and tearful shepherd-girl. Wherefore, I beseech you, suffer me to depart, like a harvester when the field is reaped; and since it pleases God my creator, and the Virgin my inspirer, and St. Michael, who utters her will to me in music, let me lay down my arms and return to serve my father and mother in keeping their herds and sheep with my sister and brothers, who will be very glad to see me again."

The effect of this extraordinary and generally unexpected address was as surprising as itself. An unusual sentiment of wonder, dejection, and sorrow diffused itself throughout the auditors; and finally, the whole mass of the people and soldiery burst into tears and bewailings, as if they were children abandoned by their nurse in some wild and terrible solitude. The captains of the army—even those who least loved and most envied Jeanne—were dismayed and thunderstruck with her announcement. Those who loved her, whose generous souls comprehended hers, were moved with the deepest sorrow. Dunois and La Hire, those famous leaders of battle, wept aloud! The grief and consternation were, indeed, so general and openly displayed, that scarcely any other people but the French could have passed with such rapidity to the extremes of passions so opposite.

The king himself seemed the most amazed of the whole number of the auditors, and looked in silent dismay at La Trimouille. The latter was himself the very picture of mortification and wonder; but he made a gesture to the king, the significance of which the archbishop of Rheims hastened to prevent.

"Be God's will done in this as in all things!" he exclaimed. "By faith, men lift the mountains, and by faith, Jeanne, thou hast redeemed France! By faith, retire now in the blaze of thy glory while yet it is pure and cloudless, heroic virgin! Obey the voice that speaks as well within thy heart as in the echoes of heaven, or thou wilt live to do more harm to France than ever thou hast done good!"

"If the reasons I have to urge farther,—if my entreaties, Jeanne, cannot prevail to keep thee,—if thou wilt desert me in this dangerous pass whither thy sole counsels have brought me!" said the king in broken accents. "But no, thou wilt not—thou wilt not, or, Jeanne, thou hast never loved me nor France!"

"Too well hath she loved them, to her own damnation and eternal destruction!" said a voice at this instant, whose dismal tones interrupted the reply which Jeanne struggled with her sighs to make.

he wonders of this day of marvels were not yet completed. The hole auditory, turning towards a passage up one of the aisles, kept lear as the only one leading by a back way from the cathedral, beheld ith silent astonishment the figure of a knight in complete armour, ounted on a barbed charger, and attended by an esquire on foot. e had ridden noiselessly up the dark cloister to the low rich arch- ay which admitted on the open space before the altar, lance in hand, nd vizor down. The surprise of the people at the signal desecration f a cathedral by the entrance of a man on horseback, was heightened to terror when they perceived that his surcoat was barred with the ed cross of England, and that the insignia of St. George, in a large hain of goldsmith's work, decorated his breast.

"What sacrilege is this? And who art thou that speakest like a host from a tomb?" said the archbishop, who was the first to recover om his stupor.

"I deny not my name for the reproach cast upon it by foul spells nd witchcraft! I am Sir John Fastolfe, lieutenant of Champagne, nd knight of the most glorious Order of the Garter!" replied the arvellous visitor; and raising the bars of his helmet he exposed a ountenance that gleamed like dead ashes in the fire of the madness n his eyes. "Who speaks of sacrilege? It is none; for purposely o I and my steed enter thus irreverently into a church profaned and onsecrated to the fiend by these sorceries! Lo, ye all; listen, peers f France; and thou, herald, that wert Orleans, and art Rheims! in he name of God and Henry VI., liege lord and rightful heritor of rance, I challenge this coronation as a work of damnable sorcery nd of a homicidal witch; whereto witness my glove! And Heaven efend the right!"

Dunois and La Hire rushed emulously forward to clutch up the eavy gauntlet that fell with a clash on the pavement of the altar. ut Jeanne anticipated their movement, and with a single step put erself in possession of the glove. "No, Dunois! no, La Hire!" she xclaimed, with a fierceness of indignation that absolutely flamed in er eyes. "I alone have the right to reply to this challenger—to the ecreant of Pataye! Never yet have I encountered, body to body, ith human foe—the whirl of battle I have shared! But God hath ot yet so deserted me but that I—all woman as I was, but am no onger—give me the combat! The ordeal of battle! And let Heaven efend its own!"

"Jeanne, no! the challenge is to us and to our crown! Ourself ill answer it!" said Charles, rising with sudden fury from his hrone.

"Sire, be calm! See you not it is a madman! Look how wildly e glares! Heaven be praised, the iron grating between us is ocked!" said the archbishop.

"I will not—I cannot—combat with thee, sorceress! as well thou nowest. Thou hast bound me in invisible but heavier chains than ll earth to lift!" groaned the wretched knight; and very possibly, ccording to the prelate's opinion, madman.

"A madman! how came he then among us?" said Charles, in a

gentler tone—the memory of his unhappy father, afflicted with the like terrible malady, occurring to him.

"My liege, I knew not that he was a madman, or projected such madness, when I granted him my safe-conduct and leave to privately witness the ceremony, that he might report the truth of these miracles to his master, the duke of Bedford," said the Marshal de Raix, with a look of guilty confusion and fear.

"Madman am I none! But a woefully enthralled and miserable captive of the fiend, am I most!" continued Fastolfe. Who says I am mad; or calls Fastolfe coward, because that a whirl of demons carried him from the field of Pataye? All France, thou liest! Talbot and England to boot! And I will prove it against all but the witch that holds me in her spell! Nothing but sorcery could have palsied Fastolfe's arm, and forced his steed to flee! Sorceress! all thy deeds have proved thy compact—thy unnumbered murders! Ha, and look yonder! The regalia which Salisbury pledged to the Jews of Frankfort, so secretly that scarcely their yellow hands that grasped them knew of it—how came they here? Where is the gold wherewith ye have redeemed them? Come who will, else, of all thy paramours—thou, Charles of Valois! Dunois! La Hire! Alençon! La Trimouille! lo, I await ye, one by one, or altogether, and with the aid of good St. George, I will prove your harlot the devil's too, or willingly die in the attempt!"

"Recreant of Pataye! who of honourable knights will battle with thee?" exclaimed the archbishop. "Clear thyself first of thy foul reproach of cowardice and desertion ere thou darest to challenge any soldier of France to combat with thee! My liege, until now I never advised Talbot's release; but now, I pray you, let him go to Paris, to prove his words concerning this man's treason at Pataye, since he so falsely calls it magic of our Maid!"

"It shall be so! Let Bedford absolve thee ere any knight of France, on pain of losing his spurs, dares to cross lance or sword with thee," said Charles; and turning to Jeanne, who stood like one petrified with shame and sorrow, he whispered, "Forgive him, for he is mad! Your triumphs and his own ignominy have maddened him!"

"Let Talbot come to Paris—there will I meet him! The regent shall absolve me, and then woe to thee, dauphin, and thy sorceress and all thy heartless chivalry!" yelled Fastolfe; but he was interrupted by a roar of fury from the people, whose terror had changed into rage as soon as they understood the real state of the case. "Maces—maces!—beat him into his armour! Down with the English traitor that calls the Maid a witch!" resounded on all sides, and an outbreak of popular resentment would doubtless have followed if the Maid herself had not taken the pains to calm it.

"Pardon him. The king says he is a madman, and he is so. He is distraught with his shames—let him depart in peace," she said with that voice which seemed to direct the will of multitudes, as a rudder the power of ships. And observing that they calmed instantly, she turned with a mournfully bitter smile to De Raix-

"Since you have brought him hither, marshal, escort him hence, in safety," she continued. "On your life, I charge you, see Fastolfe safely out of the walls of Rheims."

The malignant marshal was thus in some measure punished by being deprived of his share in the remaining solemnities of the coronation, in the course of which honours and rewards were distributed with a lavish hand. Only Jeanne the Maid and De Raix were excepted in the gifts, the king declaring that the former should name her own recompense at more leisure, and overlooking the latter.

Fastolfe seemed completely stunned by the retaliating words of the archbishop, which he perceived but too clearly deprived him of all hope or chance of redeeming his character for courage by some desperate exploit among the chivalry of France. He suffered his squire, who was no other than our old friend the verdurer, to turn his steed, and lead him from the cathedral into the close, whence they had entered. The circumstances of his visit were as yet only known in the cathedral; and the marshal de Raix, who had so affably suffered him to enter, had the equal politeness to escort him out of the walls of Rheims.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DUNOIS'S LOVE.

"Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny."
Shakspeare.

High mass, confession, and absolution, concluded the ceremonial of the coronation, and then all the personages who had assisted in it, the clergy, court, and captains of the army in Rheims, conducted the king to the great hall of the archiepiscopal palace. Here it was usual for the city to give the coronation feast. The palace was reached by a very long gallery running round the cathedral into the hall, through which the whole company marched in a magnificent procession, to the sound of music, the salvos of artillery, and the joyful shouts of the people in the streets.

The feast was spread with a splendour and taste that did the highest credit to the hospitality and good-will of the citizens of Rheims. The hall was hung from one end to the other with the variegated banners of the chivalry and nobles met together on this strange adventure. Five tables were prepared for as many classes of guests; the nobles, knights, clergy, and squires, sitting at parallel boards, while the king was to dine in solitary state on an elevated platform, environed with a gilded rail, beneath a canopy of velvet and gold. The burgesses of Rheims, in particular honour to the guests, were wont to serve them in person; and never were the duties of hospitality more zealously discharged.

It was a privilege not accorded to any but the brothers of the

sovereign (and Charles VII. had none), to sit at the same table with him at the coronation feast. The constable, or his representative, was expected to stand, during the banquet, opposite the king, with the sword of France naked in his hand. But on this occasion—an unprecedented but well-merited honour—Charles commanded that a cover should be placed beside himself for the Maid of Orleans; and the peers, who were waiting to perform various hereditary offices at his table, broke into audible murmurs. Still the king would have persevered if Jeanne herself had not knelt, without affecting to hear, perhaps without hearing, those ungrateful and haughty mutterings, and in a faint voice entreated the king to suffer her to retire. "I long to hear news of my kindred and of my village, and my heart swells so full of joy and sorrow, that without some rest it will burst," she said, with affecting simplicity. "Ah, sire, I begin now indeed to feel that I am but a woman!"

"And the best, the dearest of all thy sex," said Charles, gazing compassionately at her pallid features, and whispering in his sweetest and softest tones. "Go, then; but I must give thee yet good night when this tiresome feast is over, and hear what recompense will please thee best, and ask thy counsel on matters that concern me nearly as life."

"I shall humbly await your highness's summons," replied Jeanne with the innocence of her trusting integrity; and, rising, she bent lowly to the lords and knights, and retired with a singularly rapid step.

"We are prisoners and slaves again, sire, if we lose her. See how Alençon smiles," muttered La Trimouille, approaching with the golden ewer and napkin, which, as grand master of the household he presented for the king to wash his hands.

"We have not lost her yet, count!" replied the young king, with a joyous smile. He had just swallowed a goblet of the sparkling wine of the country, and improving on the hint of the elation with which it had inspired him, La Trimouille took care that the vessel was kept brimming.

Unhappily also the duke of Alençon's pique against Jeanne was now inflamed to the highest degree. His suspicions of La Trimouille's policy and of the king's intentions were excited, and he had besides no objection to obtain some means of stirring the jealousy and indignation of Agnes Sorel. The talk of the whole company ran so completely on the wonderful achievements of Jeanne d'Arc, and her still more wonderful purpose of retiring from the scene of her triumphs, that he had no difficulty in working his counterplot.

The king frequently reiterated his resolution not to suffer her withdrawal, which he well knew, he said, would foil all his further projects and replunge the army in its discouragement. The duke of Alençon who served the royal table as grand pannetier of France, with seeming good humour, took an opportunity to declare that she was of so inflexible a will, it was impossible to turn her from any resolution she had announced.

"You have some reason to know that, on one point at least, my

lord of Alençon," said La Trimouille, jeeringly. "We have more of us heard of your wooing of Jargeau than perhaps you deem, and cannot congratulate you on its good success."

The duke of Alençon coloured deeply, for he imagined that Jeanne must have divulged his conspiracy with the constable, along with the circumstances personal to herself. It was nevertheless his own indiscretion that had placed his secret in the hands of an espial of La Trimouille's.

"I woo the Maid of Orleans? I would rather storm a culverin when it roars!" he replied, with affected lightness. "And if his grace intends to woo the Maid to remain, he must do it with hard blows, and go to his love-making in armour of proof!"

"Nay, but as softly as the sun woos the roses in June," said Charles, with a smiling look that further stirred the duke's resentment.

"Woo as you will, my liege, I dare wager my best charger in all his caparisons, and he is worth a king's mounting, that you win her not to stay with us, despite of her voices' warning!" he exclaimed. "If she tarries, I will own myself more beaten in love by your grace than ever were we all in war by Englishmen, and never again believe in any woman's honesty!"

"What shall the wager be, La Trimouille, on our side?" said the young monarch, laughing haughtily in the gaiety of his triumph and hopes.

"What the duke of Alençon would best like to win—a smile of my Lady of Beauty, against his charger! He will not win it," replied La Trimouille.

"If it be thus wagered, touch my sceptre, Alençon," said the king, and his irritated peer readily complied.

This conversation passed in so low a tone that it was heard by few but the immediate personages. Among these, however, was the count of Dunois, who, it was observed, continued gloomy and reserved during the whole remainder of a banquet which the festal genius and example of the king rendered almost indecorously gay. When it concluded, which was not until the evening was much further advanced than was usual at a feast of ceremony, he approached the duke of Alençon, and inquired the meaning of what he had heard.

The duke at first laughingly refused to reply; but Dunois turned to him with a fierceness and vivacity that showed an earnestness of purpose not at all suspected by the former. "Tell me, Alençon," he exclaimed. "It cannot be that the king intends dishonour to her! But answer me, for I go to execute a purpose that has long been in my heart, which her marvellous goodness this day confirms. I go to offer her the protection of a husband and of a knight of France."

"Thou art mad, Dunois, and I have long suspected it," replied the duke, with astonishment. "But, heaven be praised, I can save the blood of France from such degradation! What, wed a peasant! —thou, Dunois, thou wed a village peasant girl! Know, then, that I overheard a whispered appointment between the king and the Maid to meet after the festival. And be thou certain that if she consents

to remain and master us after the heavenly command she pretends she has received to depart, she loves the king, and is no longer worthy of her title, forsooth, nor, I would hope, of my cousin of Dunois's love."

The generous bastard of Orleans sighed deeply, and withdrew from the festival, which better assorted spirits protracted until midnight.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TEMPTATION OF RHEIMS.

"Has love to that soul, so tender,
Been like our Lagenian mine,
Where sparkles of golden splendour
All over the surface shine.
But, if in pursuit we go deeper,
Allur'd by the gleam that shone,
Ah, false as the dream of the sleeper,
Like Love, the bright ore is gone."—*Moore.*

THE grand master of the royal household had assigned to Jeanne d'Arc an honourable lodging, befitting such a guest, in the wing of the archiepiscopal palace inhabited by the king and the most favoured personages of his court. She retired in the hope to indulge at leisure in the emotions that had nigh exhausted the faculties of her being—but found her uncle, Durand, already arrived and awaiting her appearance with the most lively expectation.

Little congenial as the humours of the waggish host of the Lily were to her mood, it was perhaps fortunate for Jeanne that he was there to divert the gloomy current of her thoughts. The recollections of home and of her kindred were the only ones which now possessed much power to interest her: but Durand himself, though well pleased to find her still so impressionable, was even alarmed at the wild burst of feeling with which she rushed to his more than open arms.

Durand was equally surprised to find that all the events of her magnificent and stormy career had not effaced her recollection and tenderness for the associations of her childhood. She asked a million questions about her father and all the village—wept tears of rage over the insults and cruelties inflicted by the bishop of Beauvais and his myrmidons on them in revenge for her flight, and professed, with the most affecting remorse, her resolution to return and expiate all by unwearied love and duty to her parents. This by no means tallied with the ideas formed by Durand Laxart; and Jeanne heard from his lips, with amazement and incredulity, that even her own friends and the villagers of Domremy regarded her with great doubt and suspicion as a witch. They were not like the people of the other countries of France, who had only seen her wonders. They had witnessed her childhood, and knew the legends told of it.

This put Jeanne in mind of her fairy tree, and she inquired with as much interest after it as for some dear friend of her youth. She heard with a girlish delight—strange in one of deeds so mighty—how Durand had left it a mass of splendid verdure—how it had blossomed with more beauty and luxuriance than had ever before been witnessed, at the time when she was at the siege of Orleans—how an extraordinary number of the sweeetest singing birds had built their nests among its branches, and kept the whole air alive with melody.

"I shall hear them soon again; they will please me better than the music of courtly minstrels," said Jeanne, with a deep sigh and a pang at heart that seemed to contradict the words. Even as she spoke a gentle tap was heard at the door. La Trimouille opened it, and introducing the king, in a loud and pompous tone, beckoned to Durand to withdraw. "Our lord the king comes to consult the prophetess," he said. "We are both of us too many, my master."

Jeanne started up, greatly surprised and alarmed with this visit—emotions which she felt it necessary to conceal from the prying observation of her uncle—even from herself, had she been able. She had not in the slightest degree expected it thus in her own private apartment, but imagined that she should have been summoned as usual to a royal council.

Durand sank, with a clash that nearly dislocated them, on his knees, in his awe and admiration of the sovereign presence signified by the magnificent robes of state which still invested the king, though his armour was removed.

"Good fellow, I am glad to see thee here, for I have a commission to give thee on my service," said Charles, very graciously. "Hie thee to my treasurer, the argentier, Jacques Cœur, who has orders to give thee what money is necessary to bring the whole race of d'Arc to our court,—father, mother, brothers, and sisters. Leave none for Jeanne to regret in her village! But inquire not again for her by the name of Arc, but by that of the imperial lily she has revived, and in beauty and purity matches. Jeanne du Lys is henceforth the name of the deliverer of France; in perpetual testimony whereof we ennoble her whole race, and give them leave to quarter the arms of France with a shepherd's crook and sword. And to encourage them on their journey, tell them we purpose going to Paris; and the first day we dine in the Louvre, all the land that she can ride and they can run over during our repast, shall be hers and theirs for ever; and we sit long at banquets that please us. Hence, good countryman, and let us not see thee again till this is done."

"Never, my most sovereign lord!" said Durand, bending till his nose touched the ground. "Oh, what joy!—and I shall see Paris, too,—that thought to be obliged to die like a cabbage where I was grown! It is impossible but that old Jacques, mulish as he is, must consent to this!"

Jeanne began to utter some words of remonstrance, but Durand took no notice of what she said, and retired bowing to the ground a thousand times, till he came within La Trimouille's reach, who plucked him angrily out of the chamber.

The king and the Maid were now left alone; and flushed as he was with wine and triumph, Charles felt an instant of embarrassment and almost dread, when the eyes of Jeanne were raised to him in mute but most anxious questioning, And yet he saw that she was pale and trembling—that her gestures were uncertain and agitated—and she seemed to remember that she had laid aside her cuirass and sword, and glanced vaguely and bewilderedly at them where they lay on her couch. Some such sentiments of mingled awe and passion, it might be, were in the heart of Charles, as in that of the shepherd Endymion, when for the first time he beheld the queen of chastity and night descend on Latmos to his arms. But the appearance of the earthy Durand Laxart, her kinsman, on the scene, and Fastolfe's revelation concerning the regalia of Charlemagne, had dispelled much of the cloud of wonder that surrounded the person of Jeanne d'Arc. Her solitary and abrupt apparition had given to her the prestige attached to the unknown, authorized the imagination to believe that she might have stepped from heaven to earth. But that was gone.

"Thou marvellest, Jeanne, to see me here—and I at myself!" he said, with some hesitation. "But what can I? I did not know how dear to me thou wert—how necessary—until thou didst avow so relentlessly thy purpose of desertion. Already the hearts of my soldiers fail and turn from me; and is it not thou that hast brought me hither to win a crown, which, without thy farther aid, is a mere gew gaw to tempt robbers to my destruction? Bedford gathers a great army at Paris, and awaits but the turn of my banners to throw himself between me and my refuges on the Loire. When thou art gone, the spirit that conquered for me will be gone too; my army will be fallen upon at a distance from all its resources; and thou wilt but have more effectually destroyed me, by this unsubstantial glare of triumph that guides mine enemies. The captains, who hate and envy thee, will henceforth have me completely in their power—will abandon me to the invisible dungeon of the constable's custody. And wilt thou do this? Valiant as thou art, art thou not a woman, and dost thou not love me? A warrior—and wilt thou desert thy chief in danger?"

"I love my king, for I love France; and to me thou art France visibly personed!" replied the Maid, with a pallid, fire-hued blush; and those daring eyes, which had so often gazed on the sharp edge of battle unmoved, sunk beneath the answering gaze of Charles.

"It may be so," he said, with some slight tinge of disappointment. "Thou lovest this mighty phantom in me! Why, then, behold what a torn, bleeding, dismembered France—the clouds of a tempest when the wind rends it were less so—I am! None but the people deem that this fanciful coronation restores me to my rights and inheritance."

"I—am the people!" said Jeanne, with simple sublimity. "And I tell thee, gentle king, no! We regard it but as a heavenly assertion and sanctioning of thy claims, which henceforth nothing in

earth or hell shall resist. But what would your highness? What can I more?"

"Make this vain pageant of royalty a reality!" exclaimed the king, raising his glistening robe with a scornful gesture. "Make me indeed the king thou hast called me else in mockery. That can only be by bearing my throne to Paris, and seating me in the Louvre; and thus only canst thou complete thy mighty task, and deliver France from the invader! Paris will open its gates and hurl our foes on our spears, as all the other cities have done, at thy approach!"

"Paris is a mighty city; the Burgundians are mighty in it. Despair makes cowards brave!" replied Jeanne, but with a kindled expression. "And know you not, my king, that my power is gone,—that my mission is accomplished,—that the angels of my destiny have returned to their blue abodes in the stars?"

"It may be so; but who knows it for a truth but thyself, dearest Jeanne?" replied Charles. "The light lingers long after the sun has descended to the golden palaces of his rest—so shall thy renown and its power! I need thee, Jeanne—I need thee very much. I feel that thy spirit only has the power to kindle mine,—that marching by the side of his brave shepherdess only, can France ever find in Charles a shepherd worthy of the flock! Thy mere presence inspires me with noble thoughts and resolutions. Agnes herself is forgotten in it, as the light of day effaces the phosphor on decayed substances; and such love is no brighter and no purer! I swear to thee, this crown thou hast given me is too heavy to be borne without thine aid."

"But, my king! I have already said, the voices warned me that my longer tarriance would only be harmful to thy cause, and to thee," said Jeanne, hesitatingly; "else, for the direful doom it denounces on me—the doom of fire and utter desertion—I might encounter it! The voice warns me that from this only can I be safe in my village on the Meuse."

"It lied, were it ten times holier!" exclaimed the king, vehemently. "What can be easier than for the English or Burgundians to seize thee there? No, Jeanne, no, my well-beloved!—only here—only in the heart and arms of thy king (and he clasped her to his breast)—canst thou be safe!"

"King!—Charles—noble dauphin—release me! What means this?" said Jeanne, struggling to free herself, but vainly.

"Nay, Jeanne, even thy might is powerless against the might of love! Thou wilt not be the first traitor to assail the majesty thou hast anointed?" said Charles, with the fierce joy of the hunter who has captured a formidable game, sparkling in his eyes. "The dreadful cuirass no longer hardens thy bosom, and thou art no longer Charles's champion, but Charles's love—but Charles's only adoration—for Charles, too, is there the people! If thou art the people, we are one, and evermore will be so!"

"Most dear king! release me, if thou wouldst not bring down the

lightning on us both," exclaimed Jeanne, wildly. "Release me, or by the Virgin Mother of Christ!——What wouldst thou? Ah, king, dearest king! wouldst thou have me betray Heaven and mine own heart, and thy sweet wife and sad queen, and become the vile thing I scorned in Agnes, and taught France to scorn?"

"Thou art already mine in heart and in soul!—the rest is little. Who would grudge the casket to him that owns the gems?" said the enamoured prince. "Let me look in thy bright lioness eyes that have so often shone with the light of battle, and even they cannot deny—thou lovest me, my Jeanne! Thy virgin and most pure and noble heart may not acknowledge this truth even to thyself; but I am old in experience though young in years, and I tell thee that thou lovest me!"

"Yes, I love thee—I love thee, my king!—but in all chasteness of sincerity—as the light loves the snows on the peaks of Jura, which we see from my father's cottage door! First of my dawn, thou wert—last of my sunset thou shalt be! But release me now!" said Jeanne, with increasing tumult of thought and frame. "I am a vowed maiden to the Mother of Virgins—the voice commanded me to leave thee! I *will* depart, and for ever!"

"Thou shalt not now, now nor ever!" returned Charles, with wild impetuosity. "I have thee now, and nothing—not the lightning itself—shall sever us! What, even as thou likenest thyself, the cold light of dawn itself crimsons and glows at sunset! Thou hast obeyed the precepts of the Celestial Nun that sent thee, until she herself released thee from allegiance, and denied all farther aid! Thou has set Talbot free, whom victory like a chained lion ever followed until he crossed thy path! Therefore thou shalt be with me when I meet with him again, and this embrace that stamps thee mine—this kiss—is the pledge of an eternal union, which neither Heaven nor man shall part!"

For a single instant the might of the passion evoked with such powerful spells vanquished even the heroic soul of Jeanne d'Arc. Her lips met those of the king in a frenzied ecstasy of love and pleasure—dwelt there for one eternal moment of superhuman happiness—and then a wild cry broke from her inmost heart, and Charles seemed dashed away from her arms with the force wherewith a torrent rejects some blossoming tree swept into its wave.

"Away, away, thou regal traitor to the majesty of Heaven itself!—Behold, the Mother of God herself and the crucified One descend from the skies to save me!" she exclaimed, with frantic fervour, and stretching her arms upward and gazing with so wild a look towards the couch, that Charles himself turned to gaze at it, expecting the appearance of some miraculous portent.

"It is only a painted carving of a crucifixon, illumined by a passing radiance of moonlight, Jeanne!" he exclaimed, after a pause.

"Be it so; the passing radiance was poured from some angel's torch," she replied. Once more hear me, king! leave me, or—I cannot harm thee—but my sword, the sword that has won thy battles, shall pierce my inmost heart! See, I am weaponed!" And she

prung forward, and seizing her sword, placed its point at her own breast.

"Forbear, Jeanne! Jeanne, forbear!" exclaimed Charles, greatly alarmed. I see well thou dost not love me—that thou never hast. All thou hast done was to thine own glory and triumph; enough of that is achieved; thou art undying in the memories of men, and I must go and perish alone amidst mine enemies!"

"Oh, say not so, dearest Charles, my king, my king!" said Jeanne, in tones of mortal agony, and some tremendous light from the abyss of destiny seemed to rise and gradually illuminate her countenance with doom, while melting into a torrent of tears, she continued, "Swear only to leave me now—swear never more to tempt me thus to perdition—and in spite of the English and their hissing stakes—despite the spear of Talbot and the sword of Bedford, the madness of Fastolfe, the world's doubt, the desertion of Heaven and mine own heart, I will stay with thee, go with thee, battle with thee, and die for thee!"

"I swear it, glorious incarnation of love and goodness; and that I may keep mine oath, and thou thine, I depart even with this step!" said the king, touched with such vehement emotions of pity, sorrow, and disappointment, that he too burst into a passion of tears. Vainly striving to conceal this outbreak of nature by clasping his hands over his eyes, he reached the door, and turning knelt like a worshipper leaving the shrine of some beloved saint, whilst the sword of Jeanne d'Arc fell powerlessly from her hand—a symbol and a prophecy!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PARIS.

"There's nothing in this world can make me joy:
Life is as tedious as a twice-told tale
Vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man;
And bitter shame hath spoiled the world's sweet taste
That it yields nought but shame and bitterness."—*Shakspeare.*

NEARLY a month had elapsed, crowded with fortunate events for the French, after the coronation of Charles VII. in Rheims, when a solemn chapter of the Knights of the Garter was held in Paris. The regent duke of Bedford resided at the palace of the Tournelles, in that capital; and in its hall a convocation of this most illustrious and kingly order was assembled.

All the knights were in their grand robes of ceremony; their cassocks of carnation satin, their violet mantles with crimson hoods, their badges, garters, and massive golden chains of roses, with the saint and dragon pendant in precious stones. But shame and sorrow were visibly expressed on all their countenances, and not without reason. This was the first opportunity afforded by the tumult of

events for the investigation of the charges of cowardice and desertion brought by the Lord Talbot against Sir John Fastolfe, both knights of the order, the latter having been imprisoned ever since he presented himself to the regent on arriving from Rheims.

The coronation had produced the great effects which the instinct of a shepherd girl foresaw. All France was roused from the torpor of despair, and the victorious English became, at a single stroke, a feeble and dismayed garrison of the vast territories apparently reduced to their yoke. Charles was advancing on Paris itself, with a greater host than had been assembled in France since Agincourt. Cities, towns, and castles surrendered to him the moment he appeared, or anticipated his approach on the way. In vain had Bedford himself sallied forth to meet and stop this tide of success; for conquest it could not be called where there was no resistance. The brother of Henry V. was compelled to witness with his own eyes the terror inspired by a woman in the veterans who had won such amazing victories under that hero's guidance. He was even obliged to fortify himself—to keep his camp before Senlis, in spite of the insulting provocations of his enemies—to follow the French host at a distance as a spectator of its triumphs—feeling that he dared not trust his troops to encounter the magic Maid. Finally, the regent retired and took refuge in the walls of Paris, not daring to abide an attack. And now, after taking all the towns and places of strength within a considerable circuit of the city, merely by appearing before them, Charles had arrived at St. Denis, with the declared intention of assailing it.

Under these disastrous circumstances the chapter of St. George met in the palace of the Tournelles. Among the knights were several of the most famous who had been vanquished by the Maid of Orleans. Talbot, Suffolk, Scales, Sir Thomas Rampstone, were there, with others of the paladins of Henry V., amazed at their comrades' discomfiture. Warwick, Stafford, Willoughby, Hungerford, Norfolk, Somerset, and the aged Exeter, occupied chairs in this chivalrous synod, each leaning mournfully on his massive sword.

Sir John Fastolfe was a favourite with the duke of Bedford, who had advanced him to many great honours, But the vehement accusations of Talbot, the impolicy of encouraging belief in Jeanne's witchcraft—the baneful effects of which he had himself witnessed—wrath at the tremendous consequences of the loss of the battle of Pataye, the necessity of making an example, the entreaties of the miserable knight himself, who passionately demanded to be heard in his defence—induced the duke to consent to his solemn trial before his brethren.

Bedford presided over the chapter, occupying an elevated chair above the bench on which the knights of St. George were ranged, flanked at either end by the kings-at-arms, Garter and Norroy. The noble Plantagenet features in the regent's countenance were darkened with the austerity and gravity of his character, and the coldness and immovability of his manner gave him the aspect of one of those grim martial figures which we still behold on the tombs of our ancestors.

Talbot was speaking. "Nay, it is nothing," he exclaimed. Though Laon, Soissons, Chateau-Thierry, Provins, Coulonniers, erté-Milon, Crespy, Lagny, Dammartin, Compiègne, Senlis, be lost -though the traitorous host are now at St. Denis—let only our nglish know, on some authority they cannot doubt, that it is owardice and not magic makes men flee from this woman of hell, nd they will rather perish! But how can they, while the matchless ecreant that deserted me at Pataye, when I and Scales and Ramp- one had borne all the brunt of the battle, and needed but his adow on our left to win the field—while Fastolfe breathes the air od never made for cowards, for what reptiles else he might! Paris faithful to us. Paris still abhors the murderers of John the earless—massacring murderess as she is herself. Normandy but avers, and the constable only chips the rock. All will go well again ere this false dastard beneath the soil he has covered with English raves instead of French ones. Give me but a thousand archers, hen, and I will keep Normandy from the Bretons till aid arrive from ngland, or till doomsday."

"Yet, this Norfolk knight was once valiant. He won Rouvrai," aid the duke of Bedford.

"Therefore the more need to punish him to the utmost for his owardice," returned Talbot. "Every coward quotes him for example; nd it works more fatally than the loss of fifty well contested fields."

"Ye are his judges, not I. Remember only that he is your rother," said Bedford, with some slight emotion, "since I cannot orget he was once as mine."

"I shall hold him as deep a coward in heart, that doth not condemn im," returned the violent Talbot.

"He might have brought me aid to Jargeau," said the earl of Suffolk.

"He deserted us all at Orleans!" said the Lord Scales.

"And Salisbury's death remains unavenged!" growled Talbot, in he tones of a baffled lion.

"But what aid may we hope from England? What say the commons to these losses? Hath it not been found impossible to enrol a single archer against the witch?" said Suffolk.

"Greatly against my will—brethren, I may confide in all of ye—I have sent to beseech the most reverend Cardinal Beaufort to come to our aid for a few months, with the army of the crusade, which he has levied, at the pope's prayer, against the Bohemian heretics," said Bedford, in the same calm tone, though aware that the intelligence was highly disagreeable to nearly all present; "and he has promised to march on his expedition by way of France, provided we trammel him with no siege—and comes with what haste he may to Rouen."

"Then have we Preston John and the great Turk together coming to rule us all, as an we were summer flies in a tempest," exclaimed Suffolk.

"He shall not easily rule Talbot—and his holy army is the fittest to encounter one that also marches with angels for banner-bearers," said Talbot, with his iron smile.

"Nor would the haughty cardinal suffer the king to come to France without his company," continued Bedford. "And it is above all things necessary we should have him crowned in due state in Paris, to mock the make-shift coronation at Rheims, and show to France that a new race with new customs rules over her. But we met not in council, but in chapter. Bring in the prisoner, Garter."

The announcement of Cardinal Beaufort's intended visit by no means increased the prisoner's chances of a favourable reception. But when Garter returned with the culprit, his woebegone and ghastly appearance moved pity in every breast but Talbot's. Rage for his lost glory rendered him insensible as a mother who has lost her child, to every other sentiment. No signs of relenting at all events, appeared in the fierce harangue wherein he accused Sir John Fastolfe of having fled from the field of Pataye in a base, cowardly, and unknightly manner, before a woman, and of having thereby caused the loss of that battle and of half France.

Fastolfe listened with quivering frame and downcast eyes, whence the tears flowed on his neglected beard and cheeks; and when he essayed to speak, his tongue seemed parched and stiff in his jaws. But passion conquered the paralysis of grief, after a brief struggle, and he spoke. He reminded the knights of his former deeds in arms, and demanded if any previous event of his life argued him cowardly or disloyal? Had he not chosen arms in his childhood, when every effort was made to induce him to become a priest, a profession without danger? In how many sieges and battles had he not been present? Still a page of war, he attracted the notice of Henry V., whose glance made poor hinds and serfs valiant. He spoke of Rouvrai; but there his voice failed, and for a few instants so mighty a convulsion shook his breast that even Talbot marvelled to see humanity survive such agony. Then with a wild outbreak of fury he confessed that he had seemed to fly from the field of Pataye, but that it was not so. He had beheld the scorceress advancing amidst a fiery darkness, and his arms and senses became powerless, while two fiends of red-hot bronze seized his charger by the bit and raced it madly from the field!

"Thine own two cowardly esquires, whom I will hang for it when I chance on them!" exclaimed Talbot. "Why should this woman have power over thee only? What master sin hast thou committed?—Talbot is held no saint, yet Talbot fled not."

Fastolfe grew paler still as the memory of his excommunication crossed his mind, but he replied brokenly. "Even from the first instant I beheld her she has been fatal to me! I have seen her at her magic rites, and therefore she hates me as a living witness of her crimes, whom she would fain destroy. Saw you not the stag that guided her to Pataye? It was that which in evil hour I hunted in the forest of Commercy, and, being marvellously won by the savage beauty of her look, I spared it for her sake, and fastened my gold chain of St. George around its antlers in her honour."

"Thou shouldst have wedded her, and fastened it round thine own to thine own!" said Talbot.

"But, brethren, from this spell I shall, I trust, be soon released,"

ontinued Fastolfe, turning despairingly from him. "My verdurer, ıy faithful Wulfstan of Warbois, whose aim is sure as the darts of he sun, parted from me at Rheims to return to those wilds on the Ieuse, and watch day and night, at every risk, till I have my chain gain."

"And are we to wait till this faithful liegeman of thine returns, to :ho this winter grandame's story?" returned Talbot. "By my aith, which men say is but small, we shall lose France through other owards following thine example ere we see his face, or hear his lying estimony back thine!"

"Atheist! no marvel thou disbelievest in man," replied Fastolfe, uriously. "Even as before the field of Pataye, I tell thee now gain—if thou art Talbot—Talbot! I will meet thee in a bear's cage, nd prove on thy well-scarred carcase I am no coward nor fugitive!"

"I do remember me, and it is well reminded," exclaimed Talbot. 'How darest thou say the witch affrighted thee, when long ere we net with her thou wert so dastard hued that Talbot himself wept hot ears of shame to see it? Yea, I will battle with thee, armed but with my nails and thou in Milan steel, if these thy brethren declare hee not to be a base recreant, false to all fellowship and brotherhood, which the French themselves call thee in Rheims! Then will I tear off these dishonoured gauds of the garter, worn by so vile a slave. Shame now is not to him who thinks shame of Edward's badge, but to him who thinks *not* shame of it! Yea, sirs, make it so, and I will fight with him as your champion while I have blood to spend, or arm to shed it."

"Ah, gentle sirs, brothers! give me death ere that dishonour!" said Fastolfe, despairingly clasping his hands.

"Death follows this dishonour—death, by all laws that soldiers ever made," returned Talbot. "But death may go before and prevent the shame of our order. If thou darest die, Fastolfe, until thy sword is snatched from thee and shivered by the hangman, thou hast the means!"

"Ah, ere now I had found that remedy! but what were it but with an act forbidden by God, to plunge myself into the fiery pool?" gasped Fastolfe. Talbot laughed scornfully, and there was a moment's profound silence.

"Take him away," said the duke of Bedford, rising, "and bring me your judgment and your sentence to the ramparts, whither I will go air me, and look if I can yet discern this standard that changes men into stone."

Fastolfe clasped his hands imploringly towards his former kind master and chief; but Bedford, veiling his face in his hood, merely returned the salutes of the knights and retired.

Even chance was an enemy to the luckless dragon knight. The regent had scarcely time to cool his choler by ascending the lofty ramparts of the city, towards St. Denis, and inhaling the breeze that blew over them, ere a cry arose of the "Armagnacs, the Armagnacs!" a name by which the Parisians still designated the partisans of Charles VII. And in reality, the banners of an innumerable host,

stretching far and near like the masts of some great harbour on a gala day, streamed into sight along the horizon towards St. Denis. A brief space of time brought them into full view; and the well practised eyes of the regent discovered that the mass of his enemy's army was approaching the walls of Paris.

The goodwill and impetuous purposes that animated the assailants might be perceived in the straining rapidity of their march, resembling that of an ostrich in flight over the desert, with its head thrust far in advance of its limbs. The magnificent company of chivalry that formed the vanguard seemed composed of the most distinguished nobles and knights, to judge by the splendour of their garniture. And in advance even of these paladins, as if she enjoyed being alone, or that her devouring thoughts urged her more restlessly on, came the Maid of Orleans. The mixture of female habiliments with those of a warrior, the length of her surcoat which flowed to her spurs, her snowy charger and plumes and standard, sufficiently distinguished her from any other leader.

The duke of Bedford would perhaps have felt less wrath and detestation kindle in his breast when he marked this figure, if he could have read the secrets of hers. He would have experienced less doubt and apprehension could he have fathomed the various and even opposing motives which brought this numerous host so resolutely against his strength.

Charles VII. and his minister had apparently every reason to exult in the success of their project. After the events of Rheims, and the consent of the Maid to continue in his service, the hearts of the French soldiery and people seemed to return to him by an invisible but irresistible attraction. He had only to march to conquer, and in the general opinion, Paris itself awaited only his arrival to imitate an almost universal example, and open her gates to a beloved vanquisher.

But a change had come over the spirits of both Charles and his favourite adviser. The young, vain, and amorous king was wearied and offended with the coldness and even aversion which, after the revelation of Rheims, appeared to govern the Maid in her intercourse with him. The excess of passion in that pure and high-souled nature took the hues and form of a contrary sentiment. She dared no longer trust herself to the slightest evidence of the love within her heart, lest the mighty torrent, finding the smallest dam removed, should overwhelm all. She could no longer deny to her own convictions the frenzy she shared, and which nature herself had avowed so dangerously and irresistibly. Her pellucid conscience showed the slightest stain too glaringly to be mistaken, and its excess of religious sensitiveness exaggerated whatever partook of evil into monstrous criminality. The idea haunted her incessantly, and fed upon her heart as a raven upon its food, that, however pure in conduct, she encouraged, by her consent to accompany the king, an adulterous passion and hopes in him. And in herself, what might be that fatal pleasure that enabled her to battle the reproaches of her soul, and continue with him in spite of sufferings so great as now environed her?

For it was no longer as in the early days of her glory and of the

opular enthusiasm. The discontented captains grew daily more verse to her and her projects. Every new success increased their ap- rehensions and gloom. All the renown of the achievements per- ormed went to the Maid, or rather there seemed no longer any ccasion for the martial virtues on which they prided themselves. eanne d'Arc levelled strong walls with her looks and words more ir- esistibly than the trumpet of Jericho! The great captains of France elt themselves degraded to the rank of the pageant followers in a riumphal progress.

The exultation of La Trimouille, moreover, revealed his projects nd hopes of entirely emancipating himself and his master from their ontrol. The haughty nobles could not contemplate without dismay he certainty that they should soon be no longer necessary to their ing. With more reason than ever, they began to revive their in- rigues to remove the evil counsellor from the presence of their sove- eign, and to restore to it the bold and powerful constable. Jeanne l'Arc was at the same instant feared and doubted by the favourite minister, and hated and thwarted as his partisan by his enemies. The ing could not believe in the strength and devotion of a passion which ook none of the forms in which his own earthy and voluptuous nature ever indulged its dictates; whose very intensity of fervour purified itself. Still less could the licentious and suspicious minister. La Trimouille began to remember with increasing distrust the circum- stances of her former connection with the constable. Every hour that brought them nearer to the forces which this great officer had set afoot in Normandy, and where his successes became brilliant now that the English army was shut up at Paris, contributed to the misgivings of La Trimouille.

More surprising than most of these changes was one which Jeanne herself was as yet far from dreaming possible, in the people and sol- diery. Despite her continued and dazzling career of victory, doubts and fears began to mingle largely in the popular exultation. Amazing as it may appear, every new triumph only increased the vague but general apprehension of some approaching and signal failure. The captains took care to spread assiduously her own declaration in Rheims that the days of her glory and mission were over, and that she staid with the army against the dictates of the supernatural powers that had hitherto supported her. Rumours were carefully spread concerning the nature of her intimacy with the king, which even the generous Dunois believed in sorrowful silence, and which further weakened her sway over the popular belief. They beheld her no longer environed by a sacred escort of priests and monks to chant the anthems of her glory. The archbishop of Rheims had withdrawn those over whom he had influence, and was busied with the new prior of St. Remy in weeding his chapter and diocese of all who favoured the English cause.

The conduct and demeanour of Jeanne d'Arc herself added to these unfavourable rumours and misgivings. The profound melancholy that dwelt upon her amidst the lustre of her triumphs seemed to the people, unskilled in divining the secrets of great souls, a visible testimony

which she bore against herself. Her resolves had no longer the simplicity and fixedness of a divine impulse. Difficulties became visible to her, for she now saw with the naked eye of humanity, that cannot bring the distant mountains near. She was deserted by her voices; they no longer gave her advice and consolation, or confirmed into a fixed light the irradiations of her genius. She had lost confidence in the heavens and in herself; at times was appalled and amazed at the grandeur of her own destiny, and at the terror which stretched before it into the immensity of the unknown, like a shadow of the night which comes behind the magnificence of the sun. Above all, a dreary sentiment was in her heart which, as it were, poisoned and choked the fountains of her inspiration of love and glory.

She had discovered the too human and guilty nature of the passionate feeling binding her to serve, through every peril and anguish, the fortunes of Charles of France. In blind obedience to its dictates, she had defied those of God and her own soul: a terrific punishment was darkly menaced, and overhung her like a perpetual gloom, without having the power to affright her back from the path of its fulfilment. But the worst and most incessant pang of all was the discovery of the earthy essence of that idol which her imagination had decked with the attributes of a god. The debasing gratitude of the recompense intended to be conferred upon her, the consciousness that her noble rejection irritated and alienated the heart which to win was guilt and to lose was despair—made her existence a kind of troublous dream.

Jeanne herself was perhaps the only one of the immense mass which she led against Paris, who sincerely desired to behold its walls. The captains dreaded a crowning success which would render their secret plans abortive; the common soldiery vaguely anticipated the catastrophe that haunted their imaginations, and which continual success only deepened, as breaks of sunshine illume the gathering darkness of a tempest. The excessive severity of her discipline—unfelt, or once regarded as the suitable rigour of an angelic purity—began now to excite murmurs and disgust among men who deemed the enforcer herself subject to human frailties of no light hue. The time she spent in solitary sorrow, or in suffering, they now imagined to be devoted to courtly pleasures and enjoyments. And conscious within her heart of the too human and blameable sentiment that reigned in it, she rejected the adoration and enthusiasm of the people with an asperity which seemed to take it for reproach, and both diminished and cooled the outward signs.

Charles himself and his minister halted at St. Denis, and declined accompanying the march of the army on Paris. The king alleged excess of fatigue, and a wish to avoid appearing in person against his rebellious capital, where he was by no means personally popular. And in truth he was wearied of the very sameness and rapidity of his triumphs; and accustomed to a life of ease and pleasure, the toils and privations of a campaign made him glad of a pretext to halt. But still more powerful reasons influenced La Trimouille. The little he had seen of war nevertheless deprived it of all attractions to his fearful contemplation: and an attack on the ferocious capital of the Burgundian

action was likely to prove no child's play. He anticipated, with growing apprehensions, some sudden outbreak of the discontent which he saw in the looks of the French captains, maturing against him, The vicinage of the constable and his army, engaged in the siege of Evreux, rendered some daring attempt on his person very possible. And he had no longer confidence in the support of Jeanne d'Arc. She had even evinced a degree of contempt, which his cowardly and unskilful conduct in arms, in which he yet persisted to make a display, naturally excited. And La Trimouille—himself incapable of an act of generosity—recognized only an overt sign of hostility in one perpetrated by Jeanne, against his advice. The town of Compiègne surrendered to the constable's lieutenant, Guillaume de Flavy, on condition that the Maid of Orleans was allowed to name their governor. De Flavy was a man who owed her a bitter grudge, both on his own and his master's account, yet she appointed him to the government of Compiègne, observing, with a deep sigh, that they who win should wear.

The king was therefore not among the leaders of the French host who now approached Paris beneath the gaze of the Regent Bedford, and inundated the open country between Montmartre and the gates of St. Honoré and St. Denis. It was amidst the general uproar and alarm of the city at this approach, that the chivalry of the Garter mounted the ramparts, and announced to the duke of Bedford their judgment and sentence on Sir John Fastolfe—guilty, degradation, and death!

Before, however, comment could be made by the duke, a sufficient one was enacted beneath his eyes. A lofty swelling mound between these two gates, upon which the hog-market of Paris was usually held, and which was designated from that circumstance, was defended on the summit by an outwork of considerable strength. It was occupied by a body of choice archers and men-at-arms; and yet, scarcely an assault made, they evacuated the fortification, and were seen flying in disorder and terror towards the city walls. In addition to this calamity, although the most instant orders were given for a party to sally forth and regain possession of the height, not a single lance or crossbow ventured from the open gates. Only the fugitives entered; none sallied forth.

"And say you, my lord Regent, that no example is necessary to make these cowardly knaves understand there is something more terrible than the swords of the witch's bullies?" said Talbot, pale with wrath.

"Ye have one in readiness," replied Bedford; and almost as he spoke, the French trumpets sounded a parley, and Jeanne approached, according to her custom, to summon the city. John of Lorraine, at his own earnest desire, preceded her with his largest and best beloved cannon, which he called "the shepherdess" in honour of his captainess, wreathed with flowers. Dunois and the duke of Alençon, with the herald France, were her only company.

"I am Jeanne the Maid. What English are ye?" she said, with her characteristic brevity, but with less than her wonted cheer.

"I am John of Lancaster. Are maids so scarce in France, that to be one is something marvellous?" replied the duke of Bedford.

"In very faith, to be one after the pattern of this straw-wench is marvellous," muttered Talbot.

"If thou art John of Lancaster, calling himself regent of France, know that the king of France is of age and needs none!" replied Jeanne d'Arc, whose eye ranged with astonishment along the mighty defences of the city her adventurous fortune had now brought her to assail. "But if thou art he, thou art a knight of old renown, famous on stricken fields. Therefore, in the name of God, come down from thy castled strength, if ye dare meet us in equal conflict, and we will withdraw and give ye ample space and time to marshal yourselves in battle array."

"Is not thy master—if thou ownest one less than the fiend—a murderer? Doth God battle with murderers?" said Bedford, calmly. "Woman—if woman thou art—listen to me! Neither by the aid of heaven nor of hell, hast thou so far prevailed, but by cowardice and treason. In the name of chivalry and true knighthood—if such be in any degree remaining among ye—agree with us for an hour's truce, and we will show to you and all the world our true opinion!"

"We grant and promise it, royal Lancaster, on our swords," said the duke of Alençon, eagerly; and as Jeanne made no objection but a glance of mute reproach, an hour's truce was solemnly proclaimed by sound of trumpets, on the walls and in the French host. In a few instants the second verge of the two ditches dividing the walls of Paris from the Marché aux Pourceaux was crowded with a multitude anxious to see the city and the promised exhibition. The citizens and garrison of Paris crowded the wall; and as only Bedford and his chivalry were in the secret, curiosity was highly excited on all sides.

It was gratified within a brief space, when the drawbridge of the gate St. Honoré being lowered, a procession of the knights of the garter, in long mourning robes that concealed their gorgeous costumes, appeared on it. They were afoot, and kept their heads cast down and faces concealed as if at an actual funeral. The duke of Bedford alone came on horseback, but without the insignia of the order. Twelve priests followed with lighted tapers, dolorously chanting the prayers for the dead; and after them, environed by a strong guard and manacled at the wrists with a many times coiled chain, came the unhappy dragon knight. He was completely armed with this precaution against his using his weapons; a page bore his lance, his sword was girded on, and Garter, king at arms, bore his emblazoned shield behind him.

The procession halted on the farther end of the drawbridge, and the priests continued their dismal harmony until they reached the conclusion of the *Miserere*. The most obdurate then beheld with some emotion the deformed executioner of Paris, Loupgarou, advance with his naked axe, and joyfully throw down a billet of wood before the condemned knight to serve as a block. The deathsman, leaning on his weighty curtal, seemed to await only the conclusion of some further ceremonies, to inherit his victim.

The clerical assistants resumed their chanting, and at the conclu-ion of every subsequent verse, made a deep pause and silence. 'wo heralds at arms at these intervals removed pieces of Fastolfe's rmour, uncovering his head first, and revealing a ghastly picture of espair and shame that affected the hardest spectators. Dunois, hom he had overthrown in battle, covered his face and wept aloud, nd Jeanne turned hers away with an expression of anguish.

"This is the helmet of Sir John Fastolfe, Knight of the Garter, ord of Caister, and lieutenant of Champagne, attaint and convicted f cowardice and desertion of the banner of my lord St. George and f the king, and, therefore, most worthily adjudged and condemned o degradation from his noble, chivalric, and warlike rank, and to eath! Live the king!" proclaimed Garter, and repeated a similar peech at the removal of every piece of armour.

Helmet, collar, girdle, sword, gorget, gauntlets, spurs, breast-late, and backplate, were thus removed, and Fastolfe appeared in his oublet and hose of soiled silk. The heralds continued their task: arter, king-at-arms, advanced, and reversing the shield of Fastolfe's lazonry which he carried, proclaimed, "This is the shield and coat of he false traitor and recreant, Fastolfe of Caister!"

"That deserted me at Pataye!" shouted Talbot, and anticipating he herald's diligence, he shattered the shield to shreds with the axe f the executioner.

This ceremony concluded, the priests extinguished their tapers, and alked round the condemned and motionless knight in a circle until ney had chanted the hundred and nineteenth psalm of David, held y the Church to be a prophetic malediction of Judas Iscariot. These urses duly sung, a pursuivant in attendance on the heralds advanced, nd held a silver ewer, full of warm water, over Fastolfe's head.

"Tell me, pursuivant, what man is this, by name and surname?" hen quoth Garter.

"Sir John Fastolfe! Sir John Fastolfe! Sir John Fastolfe!" re-lied the pursuivant in a raised voice, as if proclaiming his ignominy o the world.

"Thou art deceived, pursuivant, for that was a noble and faithful night: and tell me, knights, what have ye adjudged this man to be?" eturned the king-at-arms.

"A traitor, a coward! Read, Garter, our judgment," said Talbot, anding a scroll to the functionary, who read aloud that, by the nanimous judgment of the brethren of the Garter in chapter as-embled, Sir John Fastolfe was declared unworthy any longer to bear he title of a knight, banished from their fellowship, degraded from hivalry, and condemned to die by the axe of the common execu-ioner. These words uttered, the king at arms emptied the ewer of vater over Fastolfe's head! A willow drenched in midnight rain ould scarcely present a more woful and wobegone spectacle.

Garter was then about to pronounce the words by which even the hildren of the degraded knight were declared for ever infamous, gnoble, and *peasants*, when a cry or rather yell was heard from the ate of St. Honoré. A man in a stained and ragged garb, as if he

had been for months exposed to all the variations of the weathe with an archer's bow on his back, and shaking a chain of gold delir ously aloft, came rushing over the drawbridge.

"Release my lord, release him!" cried the verdurer of Commerc "The spell is broken; I have slain the stag! Many a moonlight nigl did I watch for him till I dared seek him beneath the witch's tree That was his lair, and there I slew him!"

"It is in vain, good yeoman! your lord is condemned; but w retain thee in our proper service," said the Duke of Bedford.

"My lord, I am a vassal of Caister; I will serve none but Sir Joh Fastolfe," replied the archer. "Release him, for I have redeeme him from his spell.

"No, Wulfstan, leave me. Let all leave me; I am an excomm nicated wretch, that have brought my penalties on the cause I soug to serve!" said Fastolfe, accepting with a wild look his strange restored chain. "The Bishop of Beauvais excommunicated me, an rightly, for striking a priest; yet dared I still to mingle among Chri tian men!"

Wulfstan, who had knelt before his lord, started on his feet sever paces back, with a face full of blank horror. A shiver of fear ra through both masses of the spectators, and Talbot alone seemed fr from the infection of superstition. "By St. George! this is the be thing I have heard of thee for some time, if it be that the doubl tongued reveller of Beauvais has cast thee out of communion!" h exclaimed.

"Deem not I dread the deathsman and his axe, my mighty lor when, for this cause, I beseech you on my knees to spare my lif until the bishop has withdrawn his curse," said the woful knigh falling prostrate before the regent's charger. "Only in this beha do I dare remind your royal grace, that once I was your dear knigh and called your brother-in-arms!"

"Fastolfe," replied the duke, even his stern and cold nature move to tears. "Talbot has forgotten Rouvrai, but England and Bedfo have not! Go to Beauvais, and in person win this absolution the needest, and never return to the death to which thy brethren hav doomed thee!"

"I will return my lord! I will return to die as faithfully as bridegroom to a new-wedded love!" said Fastolfe, springing up wit a sudden reaction as if of all the powers of life.

"We will give thee way, fortuneless knight, and God speed the on it," said Dunois; and the Duke of Bedford, vaulting from h horse, threw him the reins. "My grooms will deem thou hast pr faned by touching it, therefore take it with thee," he said; and Fa tolfe leaped into the saddle. Then as if anxious to speed from t sight of his ignominy, he struck his spurless heels on the charger flanks, and crossed, at a wild bound, the space of drawbridge n lowered, to the opposite verge. Another ditch divided him from t host of France, but he was now directly opposite the station Jeanne d'Arc. And even her mighty heart quailed before the gla of mad hatred and vengeance in the glance which he cast upon h

hen, raising his still shackled hands to the clear sky, he yelled forth his imprecation. "Ah, sweet Lord Jesu! let me but live to bring his accursed witch to punishment, and to expose her villanies, and ien devour me if thou wilt with red lightnings, like a blasted tree!"

So saying, spurless as he was, he set the charger to so wild a peed, that although he had to traverse a narrow line of earth, with eep ditches on either side, for nearly a mile, he seemed to vanish as e spoke. Wulfstan of Warbois's voice, faintly requesting his master o await his accompaniment, sped too slowly after him to be heard.

"What sayest thou, Jeanne? Will it not fare ill with thee if, ontinuing in the wars, thou fallest into this knight's hands?" said ie duke of Alençon.

"Therefore let us guard her well," said Dunois, sorrowfully. "If he hath lost our Lady's aid, the more need of ours!"

"All is in the hands of God! unless He hath excepted me only of ll his works," said Jeanne, with a shudder and a start; for the first me suspecting, in her isolated innocence, that the nature of her itercourse with the king was doubted.

CHAPTER XXIX.

BEFORE PARIS.

"And now my race of terror run,
Mine be the eve of tropic sun!
No pale gradations quench his ray,
No twilight dews his wrath allay;
With disc like battle-target red,
He rushes to his burning bed,
Dyes the wild wave with bloody light,
Then sinks at once—and all is night."—*Scott.*

The spectacle of her enemy's degradation produced an unfavourable effect on Jeanne herself among the chivalry of France. They sympathised rather with the fallen knight than with the victorious peasant girl. Without visibly working at such a result, it was so managed by them that the preparations for an assault on Paris languished to a tedious length.

Jeanne herself had lost the energy and decision of her earlier career. She listened to counsel,—she perceived difficulties:—for the first time, with all her genius for war, she appreciated the dangers of her undertaking. And they were great and many. Paris was fortified with all the resources of art in that age. The citizens were either more enlightened or less credulous than the rest of France. They ridiculed and despised the celestial claims of the weird peasant girl. They dreaded the vengeance of Charles and of his friends, for the great massacre they had perpetrated some years before on his kin and allies. The English chivalry were roused and appalled with the terrible chastisement of Fastolfe, and the soldiery were fired with hope

to avenge the shame of a once beloved leader while comforted by i against their superstitious fears.

Everything presaged an obstinate resistance, instead of the facil conquest anticipated by Charles and his advisers. Innumerable an bloody sorties and skirmishes interrupted the assailants, for besieger they could not be called, in their attempts to make an impression o the northern face of the city, to which they confined their efforts. I vain did the cannon of John of Lorraine batter the walls between th gates of St. Denis and St. Honoré from the commanding hill of th Marché aux Pourceaux. Gunners of almost equal skill replied t him, destroyed his approaches, and kept the line of attack clear wit a perpetual storm of artillery and arrows. The operations were con tinually interrupted by the real or pretended necessity of retirin every night to a distance from the city, to prevent the danger of sortie by its inclosed army, not altogether unequal to an open combat The assailants retreated at sunset to a station about midway betwee St. Denis and the capital, called La Chapelle, which became thei head-quarters. But thither the king never came, much less to th operations of the siege; and from the moment when the frank-spoke Dunois had intimated his suspicions, Jeanne never accompanied th other captains on their visits to the court.

Reports of the revelries and pleasures in which the king had re plunged meanwhile increased the discontent of the troops, lyin without shelter and often without food, beneath the walls of Paris The duke of Alençon always brought full details of these disports t Jeanne in her melancholy solitude at La Chapelle, or in the exhaust ing and dangerous toils of the siege. But it was not until he gail and carelessly informed her of a joyful piece of court news, whic intimated that the Lady of Beauty was on her way to St. Denis, tha her patience seemed exhausted.

"Let the king come and join us! What means he by keeping a such a distance while men bleed for him?" she exclaimed. "All i ready for an assault, or shall be by to-morrow noon; bid him come and strive first by his presence and promises of pardon, to melt thes furious hearts of Paris to remorse!"

"He will not come without some strong enforcement, Jeanne, sinc he expects his paramour, who will not willingly put her rosy body i danger," said Alençon. "Therefore let us all go to the court t morrow, well attended, and bring him in a loving and most honourabl manner to the camp."

"Go all of ye,—but without me!" replied Jeanne, with a sigh "I shall be busied making the preparations complete before Paris."

"At least, we must have thy signature to a woful petition we wi all jointly indite," said the crafty duke.

"I cannot write, fair duke, as well thou knowest," returned th Maid.

"But who can mistake thy cross?" said the duke.

Accordingly a species of military round-robin was presented t Charles at his breakfast on the following day, entreating him to come and by his presence hearten the soldiery in the intended assault o

'aris that day. It was so well seconded by the masses of chivalry ccompanying their chiefs, that neither the king nor his minister dared efuse compliance, especially as Jeanne's peremptory flourish was mong the signatures. Charles proceeded on the journey very much ut of humour; for not only was he taken to scenes and company lien to his temper, but he was compelled to leave St. Denis at a time hen the arrival of the Lady of Beauty was hourly expected. The epulses of her heroic rival, absence, and a skilfully tender love-nessage from Agnes, had almost entirely restored his heart to its oft allegiance.

Charles arrived about noonday before his capital, attended by all he chivalry; but long before he came in sight of the siege, the errific roar of culverins announced with what vigour Jeanne was arrying it on. He arrived at length on the eminence occupied by ohn of Lorraine with his artillery, whence he thundered on Paris, hich replied in thunder. The main host was drawn up in battle-rray behind these sheltering heights, ready to repel any interruption hat might be made from the city. With all his constitutional in-lifference to danger, Charles could not forbear starting and crossing imself when he beheld the raging hell of fire and smoke that filled he whole valley between Paris and the point of attack. It was only t intervals that he caught a view of the ramparts crowded with glittering masses of armour, and the overlooking spires and buildings f the capital. Out of temper, too, as he was with Jeanne and her loings, and considering what he had been obliged to leave, the king ould scarcely conceal his feelings of disgust and anger when he dis-erned her engaged indeed like the sorceress her enemies called her, n directing this tempest of war.

Jeanne was on foot, personally occupied in the remount of a species f cannon called a serpent, which had been three times cast from its mbankment, and which the soldiers would else have deserted, so readful was the carnage around it, and so persevering the efforts of he besiegers to dislodge it. "Courage, my brothers!" she was aying. "See you not that it doth them most harm, since they are nost anxious to be quit of it?" Her complexion was embrowned and listered by a six weeks' exposure in this laborious attack, and it was arther blackened and disfigured by the fire and smoke of the artillery. Her helmet was off, and her dark hair lay mattedly on her temples; ier eyes flamed; a warlike perspiration bathed her limbs; her attitude was full of energy and amazonian daring—but in nothing feminine. An emotion of horror was visible on the countenance of the king when he recognized her. With all that she had won for him, it was the first time that he had seen her engaged in actual warfare, or wit-nessed the horrors of battle with his own eyes.

La Trimouille was not at all valiant by nature, and he was harassed by fears, almost as potent as those which the enemy diffused, of the friends around him. A stone shot from a veuglaire fell at his horse's feet, covering him with clay and dust; and in his alarm he threw himself on the ground. Jeanne herself could not forbear a scornful laugh at this exhibition of animal fear, in which all the captains and

the king himself joined, and La Trimouille was taken up severely bruised. He healed of his bruises soon, but never of that laugh.

There was little mirth in Jeanne's countenance, nevertheless, when after this effusion she turned and greeted the king. There was something sadder than tears in her eyes—more reproachful than upbraidings in her accents—as she exclaimed, "Ah, gentle king!—how many eyes are closed for ever that would have brightened to see thee hadst thou come sooner!"

"I have obeyed my masters and mistress, Jeanne!—what wouldst thou more?" replied Charles, pettishly.

"Let us cease this rage of fire: it is vain; the walls of Paris are built of rock!" said Jeanne, in an altered and impatient tone. "Let us show Paris her king; let us see if his aspect can daunt the hearts of his enemies as it doth those of his friends!—Nay, my king, I said not that: my sorrow raves! John, bid your dragons hold their wasteful breath, and we will talk with Paris."

"I thought that Paris would have yielded like the other cities, else well both I and my council know the vanity of setting my soldiers to butt at it, like rams at a pin-fold," returned Charles.

"You summoned them in person—summon this!" said Jeanne, gazing with a fraught and mournful passion of grief and tenderness at the king.

At her command, the fire ceased along the whole line of the Lorrainer's artillery; and as soon as the smoke had sufficiently cleared away, the signal for parley was made, and responded to by the city. The warriors of the middle ages, like those of the Iliad, rarely declined occasions for the exercise of their conversational powers. The duke of Bedford, attended by a great concourse of knights and citizens, appeared on the ramparts, and the king with the Maid and his retinue, advanced to the edge of the second fosse.

"Who speaks for France?" inquired the duke of Bedford, scornfully.

"France himself!" replied the young king, and advancing with a dignity well answering the title, he continued, "France speaks, not to usurping Bedford and his crew, but to ye, ye citizens of Paris, bidding ye return to your revolted allegiance and to your king's eternal love and gratitude, which here, by my right hand and mine anointed royalty, I swear shall be yours if ye cast forth these rude invaders, and welcome your father home!"

"A young father for many of us!—Father thine own bastards, if Alençon will let thee!" replied a rude voice from the mass of citizens. "Thus Paris answers: Until the blood of John of Burgundy is avenged on his murderers, whereof thou art the chief, treacherous Valois! Paris will have but one executioner within her walls, and I am he!"

"Let the people see the butchers' flag!—let them have way from below!" said the Regent; and Charles, turning pale with disgust and anger, beheld a rabble of the Grande Boucherie pour on the ramparts, carrying a great banner of the arms of Burgundy, bathed in the blood

f some newly-slaughtered beast. This they flourished, with loud ells of defiance and vengeance, at Charles and his company.

"When this crimson is as white as the lilies thou usurpest, murlerer, then shall Paris be thine!" said the duke of Bedford, who was on-in-law to the slain John the Fearless.

"Hear me, then, Paris!" cried Jeanne, exasperated to the highest t these insults heaped on her sovereign. "Yield, in the name of esus—yield the town to us; for if ye surrender not ere night, we vill enter it by force, willing or unwilling, and the sword and fire nd the furious soldier shall do their worst on ye and yours!"

"Let thy woman talk, Charles; she is the bravest speaker as well s doer!" said Bedford, with a scoffing laugh.

"Let the trumpets sound an assault instantly!—an assault!—an ssault!" shouted Jeanne.

"Our soldiers are daunted with our infinite loss, Jeanne, and would ury their dead," said the duke of Alençon.

"Destroy if thou wilt and must, but let me begone; my soul ickens over this carnage," said Charles, striving to turn his horse's ead away. But the Maid caught its bridle, and exclaimed with wild ervour, "O, Charles, my king, never until now did I endure, much ess entreat thee, to remain in danger! But now my all is pledged; he people have heard me swear that Paris shall be ours ere night! And so it shall; it shall, by Him who died for those who have died or thee to-day, if thou wilt promise not to desert me in this direst moment of my destiny,—to tarry and witness the assault!"

"But, Jeanne, thou hadst forgotten when that rash oath passed thy lips, that it is the feast of our Lady to-day, but little suitable for deeds of violence and slaughter!" said even Dunois.

"Is it so? Why, then, Dunois, her care of me and aid to-day shall prove to thee how little I deserve the blame in thy glance!" replied the Maid. "Advance standards!—sound trumpets!—to the assault, all France! Ah, king, thou wilt not desert me to ruin, I that saved thee from its rotten embrace?"

"I will not, Jeanne; I will tarry and witness thy deeds," said Charles, greatly moved at this appeal.

The old enthusiasm of her glory reanimated Jeanne at the words, and forgetful or undreaming that every effort which made her more of a hero made her less of a woman. such as the voluptuous heir of the Valois could cherish, she displayed all the marvels of her prowess, until his own cheek coloured with shame at the comparative safety in which he remained. The captains, either fearful that she would win the prize without their aid, or seized with a generous emulation, rushed to plant their standards beside hers in the first ditch. The combat of artillery ceased. The lumbrous cannon of the fifteenth century could not shift their range without great difficulty, and a close assault was usually withstood with archery and hand-to-hand weapons.

The first ditch of Paris, from the exterior, was a dry one; and it was rather of advantage as a ready-made trench to the besiegers, until they attempted to mount to the other side. The archers of Paris—

picked men at their craft—then kept up so incessant a discharge of their shafts and bolts, that of the numbers who repeatedly crowned the summit none obtained footing long enough to plant a banner. Carcass after carcass rolled back into the ditch, and lay like leeches wallowing in their crimson spoil, making a hideous spectacle of slaughter, that filled Charles with horror. In vain, however, did he attempt to recall his troops from the attack. They heeded no voice and no gestures but those of their heroine, which were all forward. Finally she reached the crest of the ditch, accompanied by such a mass of archers and men-at-arms that the defenders on the walls were in their turn overwhelmed with the feathered artillery of the assailants. Their deadly showers slackened, and a good many took refuge behind the battlements and covers contrived in the walls, whence they kept up a less furious but well-directed and fatal discharge.

Jeanne d'Arc continued to give orders with a calmness and sagacity which astonished the oldest generals, and filled the king with mingled dread and surprise. A bridge of trunks of trees was thrown by her direction over the dry ditch, which John of Lorraine eagerly crossed with two of his light culverins. An emulous crowd followed, and while at Jeanne's command the archers kept up an incessant discharge at the ramparts, she herself made preparations to descend into the ditch or moat immediately below the walls, to try the depth of the water.

The chiefs of the French chivalry were all beside her; but at this moment an alarm was given that the English were preparing to make a sortie from the gate of St. Honoré. The duke of Alençon was therefore obliged to retire with some other leaders to take command of the army drawn up in the Marché aux Pourceaux to repulse any attempt on the rear of the assailants. None was, however, in reality intended. The duke of Bedford was even yet unwilling to trust his troops in the open field. But his appearance and the opening of the gate produced almost as good an effect as an actual sortie. An alarm was generally spread that the army was attacked on its flanks, and the assailants were seized with terror. Dunois himself and La Hire pressed Jeanne to retire, but her only reply was, "Paris or death!"

A species of delirium seemed to possess her; and she turned furiously and struck many of her own men with her sword whom she observed in the act of retiring. "Ah, slaves, ah, cowards! Alençon will keep them busy; on with me! He who flees, myself will slay him! Turn your culverins on those who fly, John, not on the walls! Bring me my standard. Forward, France!"

"It is in vain, Jeanne; look here, the moat is deeper than the depth of my lance with mud and water!" said the marshal de Raix, ascending a machine called an "ass's back," by which he had lowered himself into the fosse below the walls. He showed his lance covered with green slime to the top of the rest.

"Ha, ha, De Raix, now as ever, my foe! Thou hast dipped the lance, traitor, not plunged it!" exclaimed Jeanne, with a look of frenzy. "Ho, there! will no man bring my standard for the love

f France and our Lady?" She had left it, in the ardour of her rogress, planted on the crest of the first ditch.

"I will bear it to her," said Charles, impetuously.

"No, my liege, no! Your horse would founder on those trunks of rees," said La Trimouille, who quivered in every fibre, but dared ot trust himself at a distance from the king. "Ho, thou cowardly orrainer, that canst only hit men at a distance!—dost thou hear hy mistress and the king call, and stir no more than thy misshapen ogs of iron?"

"My life is worth more to the king than to hazard it so wildly. No man can manage the artillery of France but me," replied ohn of Lorraine, with great coolness. "But if the king commands ne——"

"Take her her standard, and beseech her in my name to return," aid Charles, "she has shed blood enough to-day—enough for all her ex to shed for ages to come!"

John of Lorraine was brave and staunch as his own best metal of unnery, but he considered himself as too skilful and valuable a achine to be lightly hazarded. And so he was. Nevertheless, ffended at his sovereign's want of consideration on this point, he arted over the bridge, seized Jeanne's standard, and approached her. She was nearly the depth of a lance down in the fosse, amidst a perfect hailstorm of bolts and arrows, probing the height of the water that stagnated in it. It was at this moment that the duke of Bedford, satisfied with the success of his feint, ordered the gate of St. Honoré to be closed, and appeared with a mighty reinforcement on the ramparts above.

John of Lorraine knelt on the edge of the fosse, and bending down, repeated the king's message to Jeanne, which she could scarcely hear amidst the uproar.

"He thinks of me? It is well, I will win him Paris in recompense! I must, John, or perish! Give me my standard; let them bring faggots and bushes and fill the ditch. It is not so deep on my lance as on De Raix's!" she replied, hurriedly, and still sounding the foul, black depths of the moat.

"He is all for the lance, and hates my culverins! What, ho! faggots and piles for the ditch!" shouted John of Lorraine; and even as he spoke an arrow pierced his foot, and in a manner nailed him to the ground on which he stood. "I cannot fly now an I would, my captainness!" he said, with the utmost *sang froid*. "And in this cursed cap I cannot see to take the goosequill out." So saying he raised the vizor of a bassinet he wore, and with which he but rarely troubled himself, and so laid himself open to a second arrow, which pierced his brain. The first artilleryman of France perished by the weapon he was rapidly superseding; and without uttering another word or sound, rolled over with the standard of Jeanne firmly grasped, into the muddy ditch. He disappeared almost instantly. "Thou, too—everything that is mine perishes!" burst from the heart of Jeanne d'Arc. But without giving another instant to vain laments, she ascended from the fosse, and shouted in tones neither unheard nor

unechoed—"To the assault—Paris is ours! Faggots and ladders to the ditches!" The soldiers, reanimated by her appearance and cries, responded with hearty shouts and zealous obedience.

Amidst the confused rush and tumult of the scene, surrounded with death and destruction in their direst forms, Jeanne's eye sought only to be assured of her king's safety. She perceived an extraordinary bustle and crowding about the spot where she had left him, and for the first time on that dreadful day, her heart beat thick and pantingly with fear. She looked again—for she could not believe her own eyes at the first glance—and yet she beheld with undoubted certainty a glistening company of courtiers, in the gayest attire, surrounding a litter of rose-hued satin embroidered with gold. Couched on that, as if too ill or terror-stricken to raise her head, but in all the glow of her loveliness, while the king bent from his steed over her to re-assure her with his loving words, was the Lady of Beauty herself!

"Retire, my sweet Agnes! I love thee now as ever! I am in no danger while thou art safe," Charles was saying; and though his words were inaudible to the Maid, the dread instinct of the passions repeated them like a stupifying thunder in her heart.

"I will not retire and leave thee here, Charlot! Thou and thy host are led by a mad woman! Alençon himself has told me so," Agnes replied, with an endearing appellation that awakened a thousand melting recollections of their earlier passion in the king's heart.

"I have bidden her return, but it is in vain;" said Charles, glancing back. "Where is she? And look how the walls are crowding with fresh defenders!"

"And, lo! the Parisians have a woman leader too, and one crowned like a serpent! O, Charles, it is thy mother, Isabeau!" said the Lady of Beauty, now rising on her couch in an unaffected agony of fear.

It was so. The unnatural mother of Charles VII. appeared on the ramparts with the duke of Bedford, to refute the fears of the soldiers with her presence, and encourage the fury of the citizens against him.

"Let Jeanne return! Let her not make me a parricide!" exclaimed Charles, aloud, in a frantic tone.

"She will not, methinks, until she has caused the destruction of the entire host;" said the duke of Alençon, breathlessly arriving.

"She—they—shall obey me! I am the king!" said Charles, and putting his horse in motion in spite of the shrieks and extended arms of Agnes, the king crossed the rude bridge to the second fosse. The duke of Alençon gallantly pressed the Lady of Beauty's hand to his lips, and followed. La Trimouille remained—to protect her.

Charles found the Maid with her naked sword in her hand, standing on the very verge of the ditch, and seemingly absorbed in the operations of the soldiers, who continued vainly heaping the moat with everything—earth, stakes, faggots, bushes tied together, tent-poles,

cannons even—which they imagined might fill it up so as to allow footing for the stormers. The water only seemed to rise higher.

"Jeanne! dost thou hear me!—Return from this mad endeavour, or I—thy king—will depart, with all that will obey me!" said Charles, angrily grasping her shoulder.

She did not look round, but replied in a strangely staggering and disordered tone, "Leave me! Go where thou wilt—betray France who will—the Maid of Orleans will win Paris to-night, or perish!"

"On thy allegiance I command thee—as thou wouldst not have me hold thee for a traitress, too—retire!" returned Charles with unwonted passion and energy.

"It is thou that art the traitor, lascivious king!—blasphemous betrayer!" returned Jeanne, yielding to the mighty tempest of emotions in her heart. "Thou, who art the traitor to France, that bleeds at every vein for thee—retire, and prove thyself the coward thine enemies have called thee! Lose thy crown, thine honour, thy Paris, and me—for a wanton's smile! Death will save Jeanne—or victory!"

"Insolent rebel! I have too long endured the sway of a churlish peasant wench," said Charles, with vehement indignation. "Soldiers, I command ye, retire with me, and leave this mad woman to her doom!"

"Go to thine harlot, king!—and forward, France, to victory!" was Jeanne's mad response; and rushing to the edge of the fosse, she waved her sword in flashing circles over her head, and shrieking, "I am Jeanne the Maid!" instantly collected a mass of combatants around her. The cry even reached the ears of the enemy on the ramparts.

"Hear you, fair cousin! It is the Maid!" said Isabeau de Bavière, who, withered and malignant as hate, surveyed the horrible spectacle with a kind of joy.

"Archer—thou art a peerless one! I saw thee lay low her standard-bearer! Rid us of this she-wolf of Lorraine, and win a knight's fee!" said the duke of Bedford to the verdurer, Wulfstan of Warbois, who had unremittingly plied his craft during this sanguinary day.

The yeoman, nevertheless, raised his weapon with such slowness and agitation, that Isabeau perceived it. "Art thou one of the possessed?" she exclaimed; "knowest thou not, good fellow, that the sole remedy against a witch is to draw her blood?"

The bow seemed to spring of its own accord to the verdurer's aim.

"Remember thy master, and free us all with him!" said the Regent—and the shaft flew.

"She has brought her pigs this time to a bad market," said the worthy yeoman, wiping his brows with the back of his hand, and staggering back from the sight of what he had done. The shaft had entirely pierced Jeanne's covering of finely-woven mail, and through the fleshy part of her right thigh, entering deeply into the left one, where the barb retained it fixed.

"Kneel, good yeoman, and arise a knight by the hand of John of

Lancaster!" said the regent, drawing his sword; and Isabeau, leaning on the archer's shoulder, as he mechanically obeyed, joyfully exclaimed, "And I, the queen, am his godmother of this baptism of chivalry!"

Jeanne fell at the very moment when the exasperated king had rejoined Agnes Sorel, everywhere ordering the soldiers to retire, and setting the example by directing the litter-bearers to return to St. Denis, while Agnes firmly grasped the long tassel of his baldric, to make sure that he would be of the company. The duke of Alençon had followed the king so far almost unnoticed; but La Trimouille spoke to him in a whisper, and the sovereign suddenly turned to him, "What commands dost thou ask of us, cousin, that wilt obey none?" he exclaimed, with a fierceness rarely witnessed in him.

"Sire—that *can* obey none! The soldiers obey only this woman whom you have made our master," replied the duke.

"Henceforth, then, I unmaster her; never more shall she have commission or power from us!" returned the irritated prince. "I revoke all that I have ever granted her! Go, cousin, and draw my troops from this frantic buffeting at stone walls, and follow us to St. Denis. If she refuses to come, bring her perforce, a prisoner. Dunois, if thou hast any love and duty for us, see this done," he concluded, as the gallant bastard came past on a wounded horse, with a body of men-at-arms hastily rallied.

"Let us save Jeanne—that is all!" returned the knight, and continued on his way.

"I am general again! This staff of mine office is no longer a child's bauble," said Alençon; and bending a glance of deep expression at the Lady of Beauty, he departed to execute the royal command.

The recall now sounded in every direction; in every direction tidings spread that the Maid had fallen. It was long past sunset, and the assault had continued the whole day; but until this event was known there were few perceptible signs of exhaustion or of flagging hope. The news acted instantaneously as the departure of the principle of life from its claywork of mortality. The assault ceased at every point; the soldiery rather fled than gathered towards their standards on the hill; and only a few distracted and affrighted men, almost as much afraid of retiring from the dry fosse, to which they had conveyed Jeanne, as of staying, were around her when Dunois arrived. Yet the duke of Alençon found him vainly engaged in endeavouring to prevail upon her to permit herself to be borne away from the scene of conflict and danger.

Her wounds were coarsely stanched with shreds of her own emblazoned petticoat or surcoat, and he learned that they were of the most perilous description, the head of the arrow having broken short in the left thigh in the effort to withdraw it. But insensible to every agony but that of defeat and failure, she still ravingly refused to be stirred, struck the soldiers who attempted it, and overwhelmed Dunois himself with reproaches.

"Thou wilt not counsel flight, Alençon, as the once brave Dunois loth?" she cried, starting up with a revived frenzy of hope. "Let us have another assault, Alençon, in the name of God and of France,—we will no longer speak of kings—and all shall yet be well!"

"Alas, Jeanne! it were impossible. The king has deserted, and with him half the army," replied the duke. "The rest have his authority to fly, and stay trembling but for very shame to leave their woman-captain alone. I have his peremptory command to withdraw the army, and bring it after him like a beaten pack from too wild a quarry!"

"It cannot be. I have spoken to him harshly, but can a few words outweigh twenty cities and a crown, which I have given him?" returned Jeanne. "He knows it were my ruin to retire—that the soldiers will believe in me no more; that I have lost all for him, my God, my father, my kindred, our Lady's love, mine own heart, my blood; and now would he filch from me my glory, too, and brand me with imposture, because I have disobeyed Heaven to serve him?"

"He heeds nothing of this—he has fled to revel in the charms of the Lady of Beauty at St. Denis. You have given him a long fast from such soft loveliness, Jeanne," replied the duke, bitterly, for the thought was little pleasing to himself.

"Let us return, then, but once more to the assault, fair duke," said Jeanne, suppressing the shriek of agony that came to her lips as she raised herself in her eagerness on the *brancard*. "I swear to you that we shall take the city, though but my corpse be borne before the host, such is the power yet given to me. Look—thou art a soldier! See how the ditches are filled—firm footing is there for fifty men, abreast and rushing. The ladders are ready—nothing is wanting but men to mount them!"

The duke of Alençon looked indeed with a mixture of wonder and envy at the result of the prodigious labour and rapidity of Jeanne and her soldiery.

"It is certainly as she says," said the generous Dunois. "Let me lead a renewed attack and I think her prophecy shall yet be fulfilled."

"You forget, my lord the bastard, that we can no longer trust in her prophecies; and what reason we have to think our Virgin Lady had deserted her," said Alençon, significantly, and the elate expression of Dunois's face instantly subsided. "Herself, she has declared her mission is over—perchance this mischief has come upon the king for presumptuously forcing her to remain with us. Look up—behold how the defenders swarm—how they are busied lowering their engines to dart flames and death among us. We must retire. If Jeanne refuses, I have the king's positive orders to bring her even as a prisoner; for he recalls all powers ever granted to her, and makes mine office now really mine!"

"'Tis false! he cannot be so shamefully ingrate—nor had I ever any powers from the king, or that kings can recall," said Jeanne, in a voice of indescribable anguish.

"But He who gave you those you wielded has too justly recalled them," said Dunois, with a deep sigh.

"It is not so much the king who has conferred this reward for all thy services—it is the vile La Trimouille—and is the same he grants to all that truly serve the king," said Alençon. "Hear me, Jeanne. It is my belief that he has brought thee hither purposely to cause thy disgrace and ruin. Paris is almost impregnable on this side; but on the southern shore it is weak, and we have innumerable friends in St. Germain; yet La Trimouille would by no means consent to our crossing the river, because the constable is on that side. I am commanded to retreat to the Loire, that we may abandon De Richemont to the vengeance of the foe, because he has ventured to approach and aid us without La Trimouille's good permission!"

"Ah, traitors—and for your intrigues with this man France is sacrificed and I am lost!" groaned Jeanne.

"Nay; for, listen! If thou wilt be of us, we will defy all opposition, and take Paris maugre treacherous friends and open foes," returned the skilful duke. "I have secretly prepared a bridge of boats over the Seine at Charenton. We will disobey these cowardly orders, cross the river, join the constable, and take Paris by force, where the Burgundians, under John the Fearless took it by policy."

"Ha, traitors—many times traitors—now I see all your treasons!" exclaimed Jeanne, re-animating to the wildest fury. "Ye have deserted me and betrayed me that ye may get your constable again! France were then indeed all lost, and Heaven will have punished me, indeed! His army in open rebellion, joined with his worst foe! Oh, too well I see the heartless and misgoverned king would make peace on any terms—even to wear the vassal wreath of Dauphiny—to cast off from his brows the crown of Rheims! Never will I abet ye, so help me God and our Lady!—if these wounds be mortal—in my most need."

"It is well, perchance; for since thou hast disobeyed God, and become the king's paramour, those who go with thee shall but share thy chastisement, as we do now!" said Dunois, his long-fermenting indignation overpowering every other sentiment.

"Is it so? Dost *thou* deem this of me, Dunois—why, then, what think the rogues of France?" returned Jeanne, dizzily pressing her brows. "I am fallen now, indeed, as if from some ridge of heaven into an abyss! Lead me away; I will hang up mine arms for ever at St. Denis, and seek out some desert to die in!"

"But, Jeanne, Dunois talks rashly; he loved thee once and honourably—better than I, that have a wife—at least more holily," said the duke. "Come, we no longer demand of thee divine aid and serried legions of light; only thy human presence to give the soldiers heart to follow us; and thou shalt guide our counsels, for envy cannot deny thou art well skilled in military matters, though in other things a very simple shepherd maid indeed!"

"Ah, what—a man-butcher—a mere slayer! Dost thou deem I love blood and corpses, like a vulture, for their own hideous sakes?" returned Jeanne, wildly.

"But endure to see them till we have taken Paris—till we have orced the king to come and live there among his faithful nobles,—ill thou hast thrust for ever from his arms the haughty Dame of Beauty!" said the duke.

"I will not—I will not! Fiend, thou temptest me in vain! I know iow thou art not Alençon, but a devil in his guise!" said Jeanne, with degree of frenzy in her look; and starting on her feet with an lmost supernatural effort, she shouted, "Treason!—Rescue!—Re-urn to the assault!—Where is honest John, my countryman? Ha, ierald, France!—thou that didst brave death at Orleans for me, ive me now but one breath of thy trumpet! Sound a charge!"

But the fanatic herald himself lowered his silver trumpet with gesture of refusal.

"All is over, then—and John lies there unavenged—smothered in he foul waters!" continued the Maid, with a stunned and wandering ook. But suddenly raising her eyes, and glaring at the now dark nd starry heavens, some mad inspiration of despair seemed to descend. ipon her. "At least, blessed Lady, give me a glorious death! What ieed of aid to perish? Forward, Jeanne,—alone!"

But both Dunois and Alençon threw themselves upon her, to pre-ent the execution of her desperate purpose. The flow of blood which her violent struggles occasioned did more than their united strength. She sank into a swoon, and in that condition was borne rom the ditch.

The retreat of the assailing army by this time resembled rather he flight of a broken and defeated one. If Bedford had not feared ome movement among the partisans of Charles in the city, he might ave inflicted a crowning disaster by a sortie. As it was, the con-usion became so great that the king's own progress was arrested. The artillery of John of Lorraine, awkwardly set in motion, blocked he road to St. Denis. And thus it happened that, very greatly against the intentions of Alençon and his friends, the bearers of Jeanne's *brancard* were compelled to halt, with the bleeding chief-ainess upon it, close beside the sumptuous litter of Agnes.

"Is she dead?" said Charles, in a tone of the utmost horror, gazing at her pallid visage.

"If so, she but shares the fate she loved to inflict; and 'tis certain she had joined your traitors, Charles!" said the Lady of Beauty, much displeased with the compassion in his tones.

"What proof—that blood?" returned the king, shuddering.

"No; this, my liege!" said Jeanne, whose senses seemed to return by magic at the sound of that beloved voice. "This, king!—that if you do not timely cause it to be destroyed, there is a bridge at Charenton which your army will cross to join the Constable. And now, farewell for ever!"

And with a look of grief, despair, and concentrated love, which haunted the memory of Charles at intervals during all the remaining years of his life, she sunk back once more insensible. But La Trimouille dispelled the sentiment of unutterable sorrow and compassion that arose in his heart. "It is plain she was in this new

conspiracy, since she betrays it!" he exclaimed. "Give me a commission, sire, and I will go and see this bridge of Charenton destroyed, *lest the enemy should cross and assail us in the rear of our retreat to the Loire.*"

"Hush—the traitors—let us first escape from their grasp!" said Charles, as the duke of Alençon and Dunois approached him to cause the removal of the obstruction. This was effected, and Charles, renewing his orders that the Maid was to be brought to him wherever he might halt, pursued a very rapid march to St. Denis, while La Trimouille branched off, with a sufficient force, to Charenton.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE RETREAT.

"Come, come, we'll con old saws and comfort us:—
'Twas ever thus, that when the autumn came
Unto men's full-blown fortunes, like the leaves
Which blustering winter severs from the oak,
False friends would fall away; but he still lasts,
And wrestles with the angry heavens until
The spring returns, and straight he buds again,
And spreads as green as ever!—so will I."—*The Revolt of Flanders.*

THE disorderly retreat of the French host continued even to their head-quarters at La Chapelle St. Denis, while the king never halted until he reached the abbatial town itself. The artillery of John of Lorraine, no longer under his own loving care or that of Jeanne d'Arc, was in great part lost, or abandoned to the future seizure of the enemy.

But although the duke of Alençon managed to rally his army for the night at La Chapelle, he soon found that his intrigues with the Constable were destined again to founder. He learned that his bridge over the Seine was destroyed by the king's orders; and that the Constable, who was approaching on the opposite shore, was obliged to retreat before a powerful sortie flung upon him from Paris, while Alençon's own dispirited masses were threatened with a sally on the north. The most positive orders were sent to the duke from Charles to retire on the Loire; and the king himself continued a species of flight at daybreak in that direction.

Finding it impossible to refuse obedience, the duke unwillingly yielded it, full of exasperation at the conduct of the Maid, and her betrayal of their plans, as her informing Charles of the project of crossing the river was considered by all the conspirators. Their last reason for dissembling with her was removed by an additional circumstance. On bringing up the rear of his host to St. Denis, the duke was informed that Jeanne had caused herself to be carried on her litter, with all the pieces of her armour beside her, to hang them up in dedication before the high altar of the abbey church. No re

nunciation more public and emphatic of her warlike offices and mission could have been made.

Scarcely knowing whether to be pleased or angry with the spectacle, the greater part of the captains hastened to attend and witness his abdication of a power that had so long irked them. They found Jeanne reclining on her litter of boughs at the foot of the great altar, pallid with loss of blood, but with her hands devoutly clasped and raised in prayer, while the abbot and a great train of monks chanted mass. At intervals of this service she handed divers pieces of her armour, which were placed in order on the altar, with a strengthless hand but an evident fixedness of resolution. It was only when she had delivered all the rest of her panoply, and came to resign the sacred sword with which she had wrought such marvels, that any signs of grief or unwillingness appeared in her demeanour.

"Let me behold and kiss the blade once more ere we part for ever!" she said, with an expression of anguish passing over her features. "Let them then be hung among your royal relics, holy men, that the kings of France may never forget they owe their crown to a peasant, and peasants remember to be loyal and faithful to their kings!"

She drew the weapon as she spoke, while one of her attendants reverently held the sheath—kissed it repeatedly with all a warrior's tenderness for the instrument of his glory, and resigned it apparently for ever.

"Farewell, true steel—thine edge is turned against the wall of Paris, even like the full wave of my renown!" said Jeanne; and sheathing the weapon, with a deep sigh she handed it to the abbot. 'Keep it, until France once more needs the sword of a woman!" she ejaculated, and sunk hopelessly back on her couch.

The marshal de Raix had charge of the van of the retreating host, and the custody of Jeanne d'Arc. But, fortunately for her, the bitter anguish of her wound and the exhaustion of her moral energies soon rendered her insensible to his taunts and uncivil offices of various kinds. A ravening fever came upon her, attended by delirium, and continuing hourly to increase, threatened her very existence.

Exasperated as he was, the duke of Alençon was aware of the inexpediency of putting an engine which might still be used against him, into the hands of La Trimouille. He was not destitute of some feeling of compassion and remorse, and he was strongly urged by Dunois not to deliver her into the power of a man whose revengeful malignancy was known, and who was doubtless become her enemy. For these united reasons, the duke determined to take advantage of the declared opinion of the surgeons that rest was above all things necessary to allow any chance of Jeanne's recovery. He resolved to leave her in Orleans, where only she could be safe alike from the designs of her English and of her courtly enemies.

This determination was executed. Jeanne remained unconsciously sheltered in the city she had redeemed, while Alençon and the other captains continued the retreat of the army to its starting-point in the

town of Gien. Here La Trimouille put a measure in execution suggested by his own personal fears, and which yet endangered the safety of the rescued monarchy. The king had betaken himself to his favourite residence at Bourges, and thence he sent the most positive orders for the army to break up and retire into garrisons and winter-quarters. The season was as yet but little advanced for such an operation, and it abandoned the open countries recently acquired to the sword of the enemy. But such positive information accompanied these commands, that the government could not supply the army either with provisions or money if it continued together, that the captains perceived very plainly it would not. They were compelled to disband their forces, and retire in disgust and wrath to their separate castles and garrisons.

These were the first news that Jeanne learned, or at all events clearly comprehended, after she awoke from her long lethargy of exhaustion in Orleans. They seemed scarcely to trouble her, or even to excite her notice. Her mind was stunned with the excess of her griefs and calamities. Yet she took almost as little notice of the pangs purely physical which also awaited her. The arrowhead had rankled in the wound, or the knives of unskilful chirurgeons had so mangled her in extracting it, that, but from the extreme purity of her young blood, she must have perished. As it was, she continued powerlessly chained to her couch in Orleans.

But what a different Orleans was it now from the Orleans of the famous siege, the Orleans of her rising glory! The city shared the prejudice of the worshippers of the sun, who take no delight in, pay no adoration to, its setting beams. The odours of defeat were evil in the nostrils of a city pampered and spoilt with victory. The belief which spread far and near, both among the French and English, that the days of Jeanne's mission or compact were over, was abundantly shared by Orleans. Its people were now in safety, were extremely apprehensive of any renewal of their sufferings and dangers, and their glorious redemptress appeared among them now a fugitive, in whose traces vengeance and war followed like angry bloodhounds.

Well had it been for the unfortunate heroine if she had perished of her honourable wounds ere she drained to its last bitter dreg the cup of desertion and ingratitude. But the vigour of her blood, after a long struggle, foiled the efforts of the compassionate death that strove to anticipate her horrific doom. She continued for a considerable time unable to stir from her bed, but out of danger from her wounds; while her mind gradually revived from the stunning torpor of its exhaustion, to a multiplied anguish, like a body precipitated from some great height, recovering sensation only to suffer.

Every cause for grief that could wring the human heart seemed assembled to assail that heroic but all-sensitive spirit. Heaven itself, in which she had confided when nothing earthly aided her, seemed to abandon her. She had disobeyed what were apparently its express injunctions, since her first and mighty failure before Paris had demonstrated the literal understanding she ought to have given

to the Voices commanding her to relinquish thenceforth the glory of battles. The celestial Mother and Queen, in whose guidance above all she had trusted, and her virgin protectresses, had doubtless deserted her. Sense of the passion which still burned in her soul's deepest essence, which wrongs and insults had not subdued but quickened, seemed to her fine conscience an adulterous guilt sufficient to account for that and still vaster abandonments. She remembered, with ever increasing horror and fear, the criminal ecstasy of the single moment in Rheims when she had confessed an answering love—yielded with answering frenzy to the king's guilty passion.

But even more dismally and woefully did she examine and dwell upon her position with regard to Charles. It was plain that the sovereign for whom she had worked such wonders, for whom she had shed her blood so profusely—the man whom she had loved so wildly and devotedly—had cast her off for ever, given her up to the vengeance of her enemies, despised and hated her for the very qualities which had been his salvation. Never for an instant did Jeanne quite forget the loathing and horror with which he turned from her in the midst of her sanguinary labours, whatever thoughts besides tossed in her stormy reveries. Her own superstitious awe and reverence for the person of the king exaggerated in a fearful degree the contumely and insult with which, in her frenzy of disappointment, she had loaded him. She felt that the majesty of a king so violated could not be expected to pardon! Nor did her despairing ruminations suggest any hope that some remains of his former love might plead her cause. She beheld him, in her mind's fevered gaze, enthralled more completely than ever in the charms of her enemy, the Lady of Beauty. With all her idolatrous tenderness for the king, the unhappy heroine had penetrated the secret of his unstable, selfish, and voluptuous nature.

If she needed assurances of these facts, they arrived on every wind. The complaints of the impoverished but continually re-taxed citizens of France represented the king and his court as revelling in every species of luxury and extravagance at Bourges. Charles and his ministers openly declared that they would never again put his person to the hazard of war and the seditious designs of the captains. The king was well pleased with fair pretexts of policy to excuse his own love of ease and pleasure, and, as if to indemnify himself for the short interval he had been compelled to pass amidst the fatigues and horrors of war, he now surpassed all former profusion and recklessness in his indulgences. Certes, he amply repayed himself, in the warmth and licence of the Lady of Beauty's caresses, for the cold chastity and sobriety of his journey to Rheims.

A singular but devouring species of jealousy preyed on the desolate heart of Jeanne when these tidings reached her ears. It would have given her a species of melancholy joy if the legitimate object of the royal affections—if Marie d'Anjou had been restored to her rights over the heart and person of her royal husband. But it assailed the heart of Jeanne d'Arc with a pang worse than death to find that her own noble, pure, and exalted love was despised and rejected for the

lascivious caresses of a courtezan! Little better than such did the lofty Lady of Beauty appear to the uncourtly peasant girl of Domremy. A sense of injustice pressed on the soul of Jeanne at times like the weight of a mountain, beneath which she panted, when she remembered that all her magnificent services—all that sublimest nobility of nature of which her high spirit could not be unconscious—did not balance the smiles of a beautiful paramour, the artificial splendour that surrounded Agnes. She had saved a monarchy to which the Lady of Beauty could only add a false lustre—yet was she deserted and alone, and Agnes revelled in the results of her toils and sufferings!

There were even phases in those wild and dreary revolutions of thought when like the planets presenting their dark faces in eclipse, Jeanne's noblest virtues turned on her a front of gloom. There were intervals when she doubted of God, of humanity, of her own nature, of the marvels of her career! Vague enlightenings shot over the opaque blackness of her despair. She would dream at times, and awake with starts, that her whole course had been in no wise supernatural, that she had been the machine of an elaborate miracle-play of imposture. She knew not whence these fancies came, nor whither they departed; but they mingled in troubled gleams amidst the universal turmoil of her mind. And then a mockery, which, when she recovered from, she imagined the fiend himself inspired, breathed through her thoughts, of all that was good and generous in humanity. She marvelled at her own folly in rejecting, for some airy dream of virtue and justice, the intoxicating draughts of life and joy offered by passion to her lips. She laughed at herself as at a fool who had flung away grapes to make bread of stones. The infidelity of despair was upon her, even upon the inspired and religious Maid of Orleans!

But it must be allowed she had abundant reasons, of a more tangible character, for hopelessness. She was evidently abandoned by her companions in arms, the leaders of the armies to which she had given victory. They were offended to the utmost with her persevering submission to the king's prejudices, and too glad to be rid of one who absorbed all the glory of arms, to desire a reconciliation. Her failure before Paris had for ever destroyed the spell of her successes, both with friends and foes. The soldiery of France no longer believed, and they were no longer invincible. And the people?—Jeanne read her hopes with them in the cold looks, the unwilling service, the grudged homage of the citizens of that Orleans she had redeemed with the first wonders of her career.

It is not surprising that a despair resembling a lethargy alike of body and mind took possession of all the faculties of Jeanne d'Arc. What was she now to do—deserted by the supernatural powers that had lent their aid, by her king, her comrades, her soldiery, her people—even by her own heart? Where could she hope for refuge, when a city that owed its existence to her was impatient, like a churlish host, of her presence, and desired to be relieved from it—in her own village? Durand had informed her what reception awaited her there, where least of all was the prophet honoured. At best,

suspicion only would welcome her; her father's curse and unmoved rancour stood on the threshold of her home to drive her back. It was plain from all the rest of her kinsfolk having responded in no manner to the royal invitation, that they shared old Jacob's misbelief and misconstruction of her deeds. Nay, a still more direful fear and ignominy seemed to await her. In what manner would the talkative Durand have accounted for her change of resolution and the king's presence in her chamber at Rheims? The mournful accusal of Dunois too well informed her!

It was impossible then to return to her home and those tranquil occupations which she ever remembered with regret in the height of her triumphs and glories. To the court, then? What! To behold her king enslaved by her haughty rival; to resign herself to the effects of the many enmities conspiring in it against her, or meanly to sue for pardon and win it from contempt? What then? Perchance to renew into a finally overwhelming strength that dangerous sentiment which lurked like fire in her heart—perhaps was not all extinguished in that of Charles? There was even a foretaste of guilt in the happiness diffused by the thought of seeing him again.

Orleans rejected her! In what city of France could she then hope for shelter? Yet in what but its mightiest could the deliverer of France hope for protection against the hatred of her powerful enemies? Often a tremendous oracle seemed to reply to these questions of despair. Death—death by her own hands—offered her the only certain refuge! But the piety of her heart continually combated the sinister whispering of this ghastly prompter. Such a deed would raise a barrier for ever between her and that haven of rest and joy which her religious fancy shaped beyond the shores of human existence. Her beautiful imagination solaced her at times with lovely visions of future calm and happiness, which are often the only consolations God grants to his suffering just ones on earth.

But the pressure of calamity came on, fast increasing in closeness and violence. The spring that succeeded the wonder-teeming year of Jeanne's first appearance on the stage of history, appeared likely to commence another which should reverse the acts of its predecessor. The English had recovered heart in her absence, and the general belief followed her defeat at Paris, that the time of her compact with the fiend was fulfilled. The ministers of Charles VII. confided in vain in winter, and the exhaustion of their enemies. The duke of Bedford employed the interval afforded him in retrieving some of his most pressing disasters. He recovered nearly all the towns of which Jeanne had deprived him in the neighbourhood of Paris. He concluded a new alliance with the duke of Burgundy, who somewhat wavered in attachment to the English cause during the triumphs of the Maid of Orleans.

And now both dukes were nearly ready to take the field with powerful armies, likely to sweep back the tide of war again to the shores of the Loire. The English only waited for the arrival of their expected reinforcements under the command of Cardinal Beaufort. No adequate force seemed in readiness to repel the aggression. La

Trimouille dared not assemble an army whose leaders detested him. The discontented nobles kept aloof, and an isolated series of defences would most probably repeat the errors of Talbot and Suffolk, among the French.

These tidings at moments roused Jeanne from her torpor of dejection, and reanimated her with an indescribable fury of indignation and resentment. But she was powerless, and felt it. The hand of the Divinity no longer smoothed her way; no supernatural voice taught her how difficulties might be overcome. But a devouring impatience lurked beneath all the outward apathy wherewith she lay for days and weeks stretched uncomplainingly on her couch of anguish. A few daring adventurers or persevering fanatics, indeed, continued to gather round her, and awaited her recovery in the hope of commencing a new career of victory under her auspices. But they were only in sufficient number to justify the peevish complaints of the magistrates of Orleans, who vented their dislike of Jeanne's abode among them under cover of angry reclamation at the excesses and disorderly conduct of her followers. No enterprise of moment could be undertaken with such assistance, even if her desponding spirit had suggested any.

Thus the glory of Jeanne d'Arc and the fruits of her mighty toils seemed alike passing away. Every day that brought restoration to her exhausted frame also revived and quickened the sufferings of her mind. No communion with the invisible sustainer of her steps—no voices of the blessed—visited her longing sense. In vain she demanded oracles from the silence of destiny. She was like a child, hushed by some cruel nurse, with a vague form of terror at its feet, that vainly interrogates the dreadful and immovable presence! No word of forgiveness or pity reached her from the heartless and pleasure-absorbed king. Her proud though sorrow-stricken nature disdained to bow to ask any. She began even to understand that she was no less the prisoner of La Trimouille than of her wounds,—to pant with the indignant longing to soar of the eagle imprisoned in some narrow cage. The ingratitude of Orleans became every hour more clearly betrayed. The conquests of the duke of Bedford scattered more numerous parties of desperadoes abroad, who flocked by a common instinct to her presence. The magistrates addressed keen remonstrances to her on the subject, and finally openly announced that unless she discouraged this disorderly affluence they should demand her own removal from the king.

This last drop filled the cup. The number of poor men and women who yet continued to come from remote parts of France, as on a pilgrimage to the shrine of some saint, to behold her, in no wise consoled her. A ravening impatience of rest, of the face of humanity, of life itself, of the very light of the sun, tortured her. Her attendants were surprised to see that, in proportion to the decline of her physical sufferings, the outward signs of agony and restlessness increased upon her. At length matters reached a crisis. The garrison left in St. Denis were expelled, after a brief siege, by the English Regent, and fled to the Maid, in Orleans. The bailiff of that city, and other high func-

tionaries, understanding that Jeanne was recovered of her wounds, thought the opportunity a good one to rid themselves of the trouble and charge of her maintenance and those of her followers. They went in a body to her lodgings in the town-house, and peremptorily demanded that she should either dismiss her turbulent retinue, or quit the city herself.

"I am ready; but whither?" she replied, with the calm of exhaustion. "These men come to offer their swords to France, not to me. I have renounced arms: my panoply overhangs the high altar of St. Denis, or did—since the English have won the city back."

"They will come hither next. The people believe not thou hast retired from arms, Jeanne; for rarely doth the losing gamester leave the table till he has lost all!" said one of those who in the council of Chinon had knelt to implore her to come as an angel of redemption among them. "We must be plain with thee, since nothing else will serve; and know that we have the king's authority and licence to expel both thee and them from the city, if ye continue thus to molest and bring danger on us."

"I drove it from ye once!" replied Jeanne, after a moment's pause, filled with the anguish of an eternity. "And doth he, too, who owes to me a crown—would he too drive me forth among nations whom I have made mine enemies for him?"

"But the archbishop's grace of Rheims sends thee a paternal counsel, by which thou mayst refute both the calumnies of the enemy, and put a period to the hopes of the vile marauders, who hope to make thee a captain of banditti, since thou hast ceased to be the king's!" said another of her visitors, whom she recognised as a chaplain belonging to that prelate. "Retire into some house of God, out of such turbulent reach, in some country of Dauphiny or Provence, and profess thyself a nun!"

This suggestion at first struck Jeanne in a favourable light. It seemed to raise a haven of rest before her, pleasant and tranquil as some green isle of ocean before the gaze of a shipwrecked wretch floating at the mercy of the seas. But suddenly the thought occurred to her with the force of a vague prophetic intimation that she was doomed to perish by English hands, and that wherever she went, their vengeance would have power to follow her. And the conquest of France must be completed whenever they sought her in those remote provinces of the south!

A sorrow too deep for tears—a dejection too utter to seek any form of expression—fell upon her with that thought. She mused for a few instants, and then sadly turning from the deputation, she requested to be allowed a day for deliberation and prayer, and promised to inform them on the following one of her resolution.

This entreaty could not well be refused. The citizens retired, and Jeanne spent the remainder of the day in heartbroken and impassioned supplications to her formal celestial protectresses to send her some guidance in her difficulties. But no voice replied to the deserted championess, no pitying sign answered from those angry skies which had once spoken to her even in their radiant silence.

Exhausted by fatigue, but still tossing on that restless sea of contending thoughts, Jeanne at length fell asleep, and a dream visited her which subsequent events confirmed into a fatal error. She thought St. Katherine, her favourite saint, appeared to her, but no longer in the white robes of her glorification, nor with the splendid coronal of heaven on her brow, nor the smile on her lips wherewith she was wont to greet her maiden suppliant. She was fastened to the excruciating wheel of her martyrdom, pallid and bleeding, with a stern and angry countenance. Nevertheless she addressed to Jeanne words that, but for their tone, might have been thought of encouragement and tenderness. She inquired why she despaired of France, and abandoned it like a mother deserting her sick child? She reminded her of the wickedness and folly of pretending to dedicate to Christ a heart enslaved by a human and guilty passion for the spouse of another. And, in conclusion, commanded her to follow the steps of a stranger, whom she would send to guide her to a field of battle where a mighty chief should be captured, his host destroyed, and France finally set free. The wheel of torture then began to glow and whirl till it became bright as a revolving sun, and the saint disappeared in its lustre.

Unfortunately this vision of patriotism and despair was disturbed by a circumstance that gave it a strange support and vitality. An attendant, entering with a rudeness of late become usual with the servants of the city of Orleans, announced to the Maid that a countryman from the neighbourhood of Paris had arrived, and insisted on seeing her immediately, with some intelligence he would confide to no one else. Jeanne instantly ordered his admission.

The messenger entered, and throwing himself on his knees beside the couch of Jeanne, threw back a coarse hood in which he was buried, and kissed her hand with an hyperbolical expression of devotion. He then eagerly inquired if she recognized him, and Jeanne, after a steady glance, replied in the negative.

"I am Master Perrinet le Clerc, canon of Beauvais, but a true Frenchman, come hither unknown to my traitor lord, to do France and you a service, glorious lady!" replied the visitor, in a cautious whisper. "Is it possible you do not recognise me as one of the attendants on the bishop in that famous stag-hunt of Commercy? I have never forgotten *you* since for a moment, and always imagined that something extraordinary would follow so extraordinary a commencement. But I must be alone with your ladyship before I can reveal my purpose."

"Methinks I faintly remember a visage glazed and black as thine; but give me no titles—I have none," said Jeanne. "Thou comest from a bitter enemy of France and of mine, yet thou shalt see that I have lived to learn fear. I am unarmed, thou wearest a dagger; yet we will remain alone." And she gave a signal meant for the attendant, who had however already disappeared, thinking the countryman was some ordinary worshipper of the fallen heroine.

"I am not so eager for martyrdom, although I am in the church, as to think of hurting a hair of your precious body, madame,

replied the canon. "But you will do more justice to my motives when I inform you, that I come to offer means by which a potent city of Normandy may be put into your hands, and whence you may perhaps retrieve the whole—at all hazards, prevent Burgundy and Bedford from uniting to the king's destruction on the Loire, by giving them business elsewhere."

Jeanne looked for an instant with a wild intensity at the canon which startled him. Then clasping her hands and gazing upwards, she exclaimed, "Our Lady be praised! Thou art sent by the sweet saint and virgin, Katherine, to teach me how France and Charles may yet be saved."

"She is mad enough!" thought the canon; "but she makes so many in the same way, that it matters not. Madame, I am not sent from, but to, such a personage as you describe. The city I offer is called by judicious men, the Heart of Normandy, but more generally, Beauvais."

"A strong city, a mighty city; I have heard of it," said the Maid of Orleans. "But how may I win it? A band of hardy soldiers are ready perchance to follow me, but I have no means for a siege. Poor John of Lorraine rots in the ditches of Paris, and his artillery is all either captured or stolen."

"No siege is needed, nor would be possible, madame. Beauvais is too nigh the beard of Duke Bedford," replied the canon. "Listen, madame! I have diverged hither under pretext of devotion to the shrine of our Lady of Corbeil. But the errand on which I was sent was only to Paris. It was from the traitor bishop to the English Regent, informing him, and very truly, that unless he sends speedy succours, Cauchon cannot prevent the people of Beauvais from rising in arms, driving out him and his adherents, and proclaiming King Charles. They are so wearied and exasperated with the merciless taxes and oppressions inflicted on them by the bishop and his crew—above all, by the insolence and cruelties of a devil in human form, called Franquet d'Arras, who commands the prelate's troops—that 'tis no great marvel. He has made Beauvais a mere robber's den and murderer's refuge, for Franquet makes it the head-quarters of all the rapine and extortion he practises, with approbation, on those countries that revolted to the dauphin—I crave pardon, the king—madame, on your late visit!"

"Franquet d'Arras—ha!—he who seared my father's feet, and nigh destroyed Domremy?" said Jeanne, starting convulsively upon her couch but sinking down again.

"He did ill enough there, but mere child's play to his present disports in Normandy and the Isle of France," returned the canon. "He robs, murders, ravishes, he and his savages, without a moment's intermission! And the bishop finds no fault, inasmuch as on these terms they live without their pay, and would else force him to part with the lady of Commercy, and divide her fine ransom among them."

"Why doth he not—a Christian priest!—why doth he not?" returned Jeanne.

"Because he loves her, madame—if I may say so in so pure a

presence—and desires her for a paramour," said the canon, tranquilly, and yet with a visible depth of malignancy. "The chief reason for the same being, in my opinion, that she hates and despises, and will in nowise listen to his entreaties. And therein are you also something to blame, madame, for if it had not been for indignation that Sir John Fastolfe (he is well punished) preferred you to her, she would never have consented to go to Beauvais, under circumstances that must for ever blemish her fair name!"

"Preferred me to her! Unfortunate lady if this be so!—but I did not wrong her wilfully," said Jeanne, after a pause of amazement. "Yet may it be? Do creatures so vile dare to possess themselves of the temples of God?"

"You may expel this one at least, madame, and redeem the wronged and woful captive ere it is too late — for her danger increases;" replied the canon. "Present yourself with ever so small a force before Beauvais; and if you have an hour's start of the Regent's aid, the citizens will rise and let you in."

"And I know that then the people and the warriors will flock to me! I may war for France without being trammelled by her proud nobles, who disdain the fellowship of a peasant!" said Jeanne: and the canon gazed with astonishment, and, notwithstanding a large fund of incredulity, with awe, at the luminous expression that rose in her countenance during some moments of rapt meditation into which she sank.

Marvellous humanity!—rapidly as the coming of light changes the aspect of all earthly things from gloom and terror to brightness and joy, this beam of hope changed the whole complexion of Jeanne's dreary mood. A solution seemed offered to all her perplexities, and in a manner which argued the return of her heavenly favour. She could quit the ungrateful city of her sojourn, yet find a refuge without the necessity of retiring into a solitude and silence whose mere idea excited impatience, or of mocking heaven with vows only uttered —not felt. She could renew the glories of her career with a splendour that should nobly silence the assertions of her enemies that they were past for ever. She could show to France that her failure before Paris was owing rather to the envy and thwarting of its chiefs than to her imputed disobedience to the Virgin's behest. Or if our Lady was angry with her—whispered her religious and desolate heart—it was perhaps the best means of learning the fact, and offering expiation by presenting herself on the path of martyrdom!

Shall we speak also of the master yet scarcely avowed feeling which joined in this reverie of devotion and military enthusiasm—of the mournfully grand dream that formed the background of the whole drama—the vague hope that by the greatness of the service she was about to render—the humility and loyalty it would demonstrate—she might move the heart of Charles to forgiveness—compel it to acknowledge her inborn superiority over the rival his inferior nature preferred as more congenial to it? But the modest peasant girl who had saved France knew not that.

"You will then depart on this expedition, madame," said the canon,

at last, with a peering and complicated glance, that excited suspicion even in Jeanne.

"I implored of Our Lady a sign—but art thou really sent to me?" she said. "What moved thee to come to me in Orleans, canon of Beauvais?"

"Nay, madame!—but I thought it as well to have friends on both sides. I have ever deemed her a wise woman who lighted a candle also to messire the devil, saying, 'We never know what we may come to want,'" replied Leclerc, with much embarrassment. "But you may believe in me, for I will accompany your march, and where I am known, pretend to be your prisoner: so you can strike off my head with your own hand, madame, if you find me out in playing any trick."

"With mine own hand, as yet, I have slain none. But thou sharest the English belief," replied Jeanne, adding with a piercing, mystic, expression, "Yet speak openly: *hadst thou no other reason for coming to me?*"

"Madame! I must needs confess the whole truth then, to give you confidence in me," said the canon, slightly reddening. "I hate the bishop himself for a taunting despot and absolute tyrant, as he is, over us all, citizens and churchmen alike. Then I have put my paw in a cleft tree. You must know that compassion for the desolate estate of my young lady of Commercy induced me on one occasion to use words which her vanity (she is very vain) induced her to interpret into expressions of passion—of love—or some stuff of that name. Ever since then she keeps me in continual terror with her threats of exposure to the bishop; and now Sir John Fastolfe is arrived in Beauvais she is worse than ever, and vows that unless I procure her an interview with him and bear witness to her spotlessness, she will do I know not what. But the bishop is a madman when he is vexed!"

"Den of wolves not shepherds!" murmured Jeanne. "But is Fastolfe there—what evil destiny brings me ever athwart his path?"

"He is in Beauvais, madame, fairly distraught with his misfortunes, performing all manner of ridiculous penances enjoined by the bishop before he will recall his excommunication," said the canon. "Those who do not laugh for scorn, which I own I did, must needs weep for pity, to see him kneeling day by day in our cathedral doing penance, mumbling, and weeping, and recanting, and the people spitting on his beard for very loathing!"

"Go; I believe thou art a true traitor! Go, and tell the lady of Commercy I come to rescue her!" exclaimed the Maid.

"Nay, madame, I would rather return in your company; for I know not what may have chanced in my absence," replied the worthy of Beauvais. "And she would neither believe nor relish such news, for she hates and fears you more than I do the devil, and deems you are the cause of all the great harms that have befallen her, as well as to her beloved recreant, the runaway English knight."

"Injustice everywhere, everywhere!" murmured Jeanne. "But she—but Orleans—but the king—but all the world—but Heaven itself—shall yet acknowledge the injustice done to me! The Regent

shall move fast if he wins the way of Jeanne d'Arc! With the dawn I depart for Beauvais. Orleans, Orleans, whether for triumph or martyrdom, I depart for ever from thy walls when the earliest sun shall gild them! The latest shall not have forgotten by whom they were preserved, though thou—thou—" And she was silent with the unutterable anguish of great spirits exiled on this earth, when they discover the baseness and ingratitude of its proper denizens.

CHAPTER XXXI.

COMPIEGNE.

> "Glory is like a circle in the water,
> Which never ceaseth to enlarge itself,
> Till, by broad spreading, it disperse to nought."—*Shakspeare.*

Among all the achievements of Jeanne d'Arc, one of the most singular and adventurous was her march into Normandy with a wild band of volunteers, through a country chiefly possessed by her enemies. Avoiding Paris by a narrow circuit, she crossed the Seine at Melun, one of the cities she had taken, and by the amazing rapidity of her transit baffled alike confrontage and pursuit.

The English Regent, indeed, anticipated no possible danger of the kind, and was in no great hurry to send aid to so turbulent and haughty an ally as the bishop of Beauvais. Consequently, Jeanne arrived in Senlis before any assistance had even started for Beauvais. This city still adhered to Charles VII., though with great fear and trembling, and the Maid and her bands were here received with welcome.

So far, but little of a cheering nature had accompanied her advance. Orleans witnessed her departure with an apathy or open satisfaction which almost equally wrung her heart. She herself was dismayed at the ragged and uncouth hordes that crowded round her standard, and presented so great a contrast to the magnificent chivalry and organized vassalage of her former hosts. For the first time she found herself sole captain and leader, charged with all the petty details and troublesome management of an army, without its forces or splendour. Nevertheless she undauntedly pursued her way, and arrived with a diminished but still zealous band in Senlis, at a moment when her appearance was singularly opportune.

During her whole progress through the Isle of France and Normandy, she heard or witnessed the ravages inflicted by Franquet d'Arras and his robber companies, and her speed was quickened by indignation. But at Senlis such tidings of his murderous cruelties and exactions were poured into her ears, that she waited not to give her troops a rest they very much needed, resolving to pursue her march at once on Beauvais. A body of the younger citizens and garrison of Senlis volunteered to accompany her. Franquet, it seemed,

ad seized, in the course of one of his predatory excursions, on some pulent denizens of the town, and threatened to appear and behead hem before its gates unless it yielded a heavy composition to him nd his myrmidons.

The ill luck of this robber general would have it that he had determined to put his notable project in execution on the very day of eanne's arrival. The two parties espied each other about midway n the open country between Beauvais and Senlis. Franquet was stonished to behold the people of the latter town in the open field, nd still more so at their numbers. He conjectured that some of the rench captains had come to their aid, without imagining for an instant that the wounded Maid of Orleans was the one. Franquet was ot particularly fond of engagements in which the chances were equal, or plunder and not honour was his object. But he perceived plainly hat it would not be possible to withdraw his bands, which consisted hiefly of footmen, from a conflict desired by an enemy chiefly on horseack. He possessed a ferocious courage, usually excited by wine, and specially on this occasion, and was a skilful captain. He therefore rew up his men on a hillock, in the English manner, with his archers n a compact body defended by carriages brought to convey the plunder of Senlis; himself and his men-at-arms flanking them, in readiness for a charge.

"This murderous rogue is not the chief whom I am to overcome; I will not waste the prophecy of my dream upon him!" mused Jeanne; and she abstained from taking any share in the conflict until her cavalry had been beaten off in two furious and obstinate assaults on the position defended by Franquet d'Arras. The marauder's fierce, insulting laugh came to her ears when the second attack was repulsed, and re-kindled the exasperating recollections of his cruelties in Dommremy.

"Ha, my village hates me chiefly on thy account, robber!" she exclaimed; and observing that Franquet was forming his lancemen as if to charge her disconcerted followers in turn, she set spurs to her horse, and led them back with the old impetus of victory. Shouts of "France and the Maid!" terrified the archers, who imagined she had come upon them by one of her usual freaks of magic. They waited but to witness the overthrow of their foremost cavalry, and distinctly to recognize the figure of the sorceress, ere they broke their ranks and fled. A brief conflict sufficed to make Franquet deem it expedient to follow the example. But his horse stumbled and threw him, at a little distance from the scene of action; and in a few minutes he was brought stunned, bleeding, and breathless, before the victress, by a crowd of capturers.

Never yet had Jeanne displayed the stern and relentless spirit which now possessed her. She made no effort to stop the carnage inflicted by the enraged citizens of Senlis and her own soldiery on their beaten foes; for she had learned from the canon Perrinet that Franquet and his legions never gave quarter where they were resisted. She gave none. All of his followers, save some half-score of quick-footed fugitives, were put to the sword; and when he himself was brought be-

fore her, no better fate seemed to await him. The Burgundian captain perceived something in her glance which threw him in an agony of terror at her feet, imploring mercy, and promising a prodigious ransom from his accumulated treasures.

"Is not thy name Franquet d'Arras?" replied Jeanne, with the calm inflexible look of a statue of justice.

"It is—and I am rich—I will pay any price for mercy!" said the marauder, clasping the very knees of her horse in his agony of dread.

"Thou art rich!—with what? The gold of widows and orphans—the scarlet of men's blood!" returned the Maid. "The mercy thou hast shown shall be accorded thee! Canon of Beauvais, is not this the man whom thyself beheld'st put a citizen of Crepy in an oven, till he revealed where he had hidden his gold; yea, ripped him up to empty his treasure bag, as he right mirthfully said? Good clerk, assoil him, for although I am in a hurry, I swear I will not move a pace from this field until his head and neck are twain."

"Let us hasten then, my old friend, for you have a long bead-roll to count, I am well aware; and we should be at Beauvais as fast as our news," said the expeditious canon; and, taking out his breviary, he began to pray amidst the yells, shrieking, and grovelling entreaties of the marauder for mercy.

Jeanne had need to recollect all the enormous crimes of the Burgundian to steel her heart against his frantic cries and supplications. But, inexorably waving her hand, she withdrew to a little distance and called to the bailiff of Senlis, who had accompanied her, "You have proclaimed this man a robber, a murderer, and a ravisher. See justice done on him as soon as he has finished his confession," she said; and the functionary accepted the office with evident satisfaction.

Franquet had meanwhile recognized the canon of Beauvais. "Ah! do not hear me confess!" he exclaimed. "She is pious, she is good—there is no other priest at hand—she will not send me into eternity unshriven!"

"I owe you a good office indeed," replied the confessor. "Do you remember when you insulted me before all the people of Beauvais about a paltry wench you had shamefully misled, and whom I was endeavouring to bring back to the path? Besides, I am a prisoner myself, and must obey this potent lady as if I were as sure she came from heaven as I am that thou, Franquet, wilt never go thither."

Thus paternally admonished, the miserable criminal perceived there was no help for it, and commenced a sobbing catalogue of his enormities, kneeling on the field strewed with the carnage of so many of his abettors. But whether the unhappy wretch hoped by prolonging to avert his doom, or that in reality his misdeeds were of long recital, he spent so much time at his devotion that the bailiff of Senlis grew impatient. He approached with the machinery for the meditated justice in the shape of a sharp sword, a stout man-at-arms, and a block of wood. The canon also cut his part in the event very short. "It is of no use hearing him confess any more," he said, "he is farther beyond forgiveness than the impenitent thief at the crucifixion. If

ou do not make haste, messire bailiff, the ground will swallow your riminal alive!"

"Then may the fiend grant me only this prayer—that Jeanne d'Arc nay fall into English hands!" roared the Burgundian, at so fearful a itch of voice that his words came to her ears in the distance. Then ttering raving imprecations, he attempted to break through his uard like a bull, with his head for a weapon, but in vain. He was eized, and after a violent struggle, the burly neck of Franquet d'Arras vas forced down to the block and severed in three strokes of the word.

But this time dedicated to a terrible but necessary justice was lost, n other respects, to a great disadvantage. It is true, that when eanne arrived before Beauvais in the evening, the citizens were nasters of the town, and came out to receive her with wild ebullitions f joy, that renewed the delicious feeling of her former popularity. But some fugitives had arrived in time to put the bishop on the alert, vho had fled from the city with so much of his possessions as were ight of carriage, and his few remaining soldiers as a guard. Before ie went he hastily summoned Sir John Fastolfe to his presence, and ronounced in a moment an absolution which the knight had been ainly entreating for months, on condition that he applied himself to lefend the town long enough to secure the bishop's flight. But Fas- olfe soon found this to be impossible; not a soldier, not a citizen, idhered to the cause of their tyrannous bishop. The populace rose in rms, and expelled Sir John from the city, with a knight, his sole com- panion, called Sir Wulfstan Warbois.

The canon Perrinet would have troubled less at the escape of his enerated lord, if he had not speedily discovered that he had either ompelled or frightened the baroness of Commercy into accompanying im. Her dread of Jeanne d'Arc had probably been played upon; nd the canon's only consolation was to think that, as the bishop fled o Rouen, he would no longer have Melusine completely in his power, and she might escape from it. Another mortification awaited he worthy canon. He claimed a large share in the plunder of he episcopal treasures, and Jeanne and her soldiers rejected his pplication with scorn—the former from abhorrence of his treachery, he latter that they might have no sharers in the spoil. So openly nd unreservedly were these sentiments expressed, that the canon even deemed his personal safety doubtful; and, hoping that his share in the expedition remained a secret, resumed his proper ecclesiastical garb, and followed privately in the steps of his patron to Rouen.

This singular and rapid conquest renewed for a brief while all the splendour and terror of Jeanne d'Arc's career. For the first time absolute and uncontrolled in authority, her conduct proved how falsely her enviers had ascribed her successes to causes extraneous to her own skill and exertions. In a few days she fortified herself in Beauvais, organized the nucleus of a powerful force, which collected around her on the first report of her triumph, and moved the whole of Normandy as if with the stirrings of an earthquake. On every side mutiny and revolt reared their bruised heads beneath the Regent's

feet, and excited his apprehensions so greatly, that he called upon the duke of Burgundy to enter the disturbed countries much sooner than had been intended. He himself for the present abandoned all project of pursuing Charles to the Loire, and found his energies absorbed in providing against the progress of the daring woman who had already rent an empire from his grasp.

Philip of Burgundy responded to the urgent entreaties of his ally with the zeal of revived amity. About the third week of her arrival in Beauvais, when Jeanne was about to depart on a secret expedition against the mountain fortress and guardian of Lower Normandy, Château Gaillard, she received intelligence that the Burgundians, led by their duke in person, had crossed the frontier, and laid siege to Compiègne.

Unhappily for the enthusiastic and re-inspired heroine, these tidings recalled to her her dream in Orleans, and shed a bright conviction into her mind that this mighty chief was the one whose destruction she was to achieve, and thereby the redemption of France.

The defeat of Duke Philip would restore her to the fullest blaze of her renown, deprive the English of their most formidable support, and in a manner compel the king to abandon his dishonourable ease and march to share her conquests.

On the other hand, the fall of Compiègne would greatly discourage the loyal zeal she had kindled in Normandy, and enable the enemy to straiten her between two attacks. Her triumph there would be equivalent in effect to scores of scattered victories. She had every reason to calculate on the gratitude of De Flavy, the governor of Compiègne, on whom she had conferred favours, undeserved at his hands, and whom she came to rescue from a perilous position which his narrow genius was not equal to. Her soldiers were enthusiastically devoted, and ready to follow wherever she might lead. Yet the heart of Jeanne d'Arc beat with an unwonted feeling of apprehension, when, on a dark midnight of the last day of the April of 1430 she set forth from Beauvais to Compiègne with four hundred chosen combatants in her train.

The country she traversed was chiefly in possession of the English; yet she encountered no opposition, and arrived at early morning before Compiègne. The city was only invested by the Burgundians and a few English on the north of the river Oise which partly environs it. There was consequently no resistance to be apprehended on the side where she presented herself; and the warders, hearing who was at them, joyfully threw open their gates, without awaiting orders, to the defendress of Orleans.

The acclamations of the garrison and people of Compiègne conveyed the first intelligence of the arrival to Guillaume de Flavy the governor, who was in bed after a night's drunken debauch. The news seemed not so pleasing to him, to judge by the sullen and ferocious look and ungracious welcome with which he presented himself before her in the market-place of Compiègne.

"I am come to see my good friends of Compiègne, among whom I reckon thee, De Flavy, and to try my fortune against the Bur-

gundians," said Jeanne, with a start of the heart, she knew not wherefore.

"Thou art come as usual, Jeanne, to take the honour from the true winners, and divide it between Heaven and thyself, neither having any need of it," returned the surly captain. "Nor have we victuals for these numbers that come with thee, and, I'll warrant, are better eaters than fighters."

"That shall be seen anon—nor do you need provisioning for a long siege," replied the Maid, with enforced cheerfulness.

"Thou talkest as if our Lady still lent thee her flag—but that is in the ditches of Paris," said the brutal De Flavy.

"Thou talkest as one that hath wholly forgotten who gave him power to speak as an equal to a captain of France," returned Jeanne, with rising indignation.

"I remember that thou didst usurp the functions of my master the Constable, and sent me hither," said De Flavy. "And now thou usurpest the king's authority, which he has long withdrawn from thee, and for good reasons, had he judgment to know the detriment thy obstinate adherence to his traitors has brought on his affairs."

"I serve him in spite of his teeth! but not exactly as the Constable would have done—even to the drawing them," said Jeanne, restraining the anger of her followers with a gesture.

"Well, we need not your services here, dame. And it is well enough that since our Lady has been angered with your unchaste disports at Rheims, you have brought only misfortunes wherever you went," replied the malicious captain, who had not forgotten Jeanne's former refusal of his proper person.

"Bear witness, all, this thankless villain lies!" retorted Jeanne, with fiery indignation. "In proof of which, this day being Ascension Day, whereon the gates of heaven are never closed, I will make a sally and fight a field on which it hath been foretold me that I shall vanquish the arch-enemy of France. We will owe a meal to the kind citizens of Compiègne, but nothing to their churlish captain, confess ourselves, hear mass, and go forth to certain victory!"

"Yonder are the pavilions of Burgundy; and I can eat my own manger empty without assistance," replied the partisan of the Constable; and turning his back, he retired amidst the yells and hootings of the populace.

It is the last straw breaks the camel's back; and this ingratitude, after so much, seemed to strike to the inmost core of the heart of Jeanne. It is recorded that, for the first time, on this occasion she betrayed signs of womanish apprehension and shrinking from the conflict she herself had challenged. She scarcely tasted the viands which the chief citizens of Compiègne offered her on their knees, but hurried to the church of St. Jacques, confessed, and received the sacrament. The officiating priest observed that tears continually flowed to her eyes during this act of devotion, and a subsequent silent rhapsody of prayer.

Whether Jeanne suspected or learned by some private means what De Flavy had done can never be known. But he was determined she

should not win her honours too cheaply, and had sent a prisoner with an insulting message to the Burgundians that the Maid of Orleans had arrived, and intended to make a sally in the course of the day to seize their duke and destroy his host. And about the same time Jeanne retired from the high altar of St. Jacques, among a numerous group of children who were staring at her in awe and wonder, brought by their mothers to receive her benediction. She blessed them tenderly, and then bursting into a bitter torrent of tears, uttered words which two of them, who lived for nearly a hundred winters afterwards, remembered to their latest hour. "My children and dear friends, I inform ye that I am sold and betrayed, and that in a brief time I shall be delivered to death. Therefore I pray you, pray God for me, for never more shall I have power to serve the king nor kingdom of France. Never again shall I behold the snow! Remember these words, and tell them to your children when ye are old that they may know my heart failed not without a cause."

The trumpets sounded to horse at this moment, and Jeanne disappeared. But her stately form, glittering in its strange panoply, half woman half knight, and the contrast of her grief with the pomp and glory that seemed to surround her, struck even those innocent minds with wonder and misgivings of the suffering and sorrows of existence.

And at the very instant when Jeanne put her foot into the stirrup her apprehensions were increased by the recollection that this was the first of May, the day of the feast of the fairy tree, but also the first after the expiration of her promised year of triumph. She observed the bunches of May and flowers with which the soldiers had decked their helmets in honour of the occasion.

"Good Lord, why shakes my heart thus?" she exclaimed, almost involuntarily, and withdrawing her foot. "Comrades, I know not why, but for the first time my heart trembles at the blasts of the trumpets, at the snorting of the war-horses—and yet it is a day of beauty and victory, like those whereon we have often vanquished together. It came out of heaven as with a blessing on its fair head it hath no father's curse upon it!" And shuddering convulsively she sprang into the saddle; but the wild shout that usually greeted her appearance in arms was not heard. Her words struck a deep misgiving and sadness into the hearts of the soldiery, and a part of the citizens and garrison who had determined to accompany her on the *sortie*, against the will of the captain of Compiègne, remained behind.

De Flavy himself watched their departure in a tower over the great gate, where he had permitted the drawbridge to be lowered over the river Oise. On the opposite shore of this stream stretched a series of beautiful meadows, all golden over with cowslips, and pleasantly shadowed by trees. Among these, at the distance of about half a mile, extended the orderly lines of the Burgundian encampment. Midway was an abrupt mount or eminence, called Mont de Clairoy, too near the culverins of Compiègne to be occupied while its defenders kept up a diligent observation.

Not suspecting for an instant the dark treachery contrived, Jeanne no sooner discerned the enemy who had inflicted so many woes on

France, than her martial and patriotic feelings were rekindled as with fire. She addressed a few burning words to her soldiers, like those wherewith in her most inspired moments she had breathed courage into the dismayed ranks of her country. They answered with shouts of "Vive la Pucelle!" and poured in so full and furious a tide upon the Burgundian encampment, that every obstacle of ditch and stakes was almost instantly surmounted. Jeanne had directed the assault upon the quarter where she beheld the banner of Duke Philip waving, and it had been determined not to offer her any strenuous resistance until she was fairly engaged, at a distance from refuge. But the manœuvre had nearly proved destructive to its planners. The Burgundians affected to be taken by surprise, but were in reality so much so that the mighty project of Jeanne d'Arc was on the very verge of triumph. She herself seized and tore down the banner of the duke of Burgundy, trampling its betrayed lilies beneath her charger's feet, and calling, "Traitor, traitor—yield to France!" so piercingly that Philip heard and whitened at the cry where he stood in the rear of the camp, surrounded by his chief officers. But at this moment of victory, yells of "Treason! ambush! treason!" resounded among the soldiery of Jeanne.

She looked back, and for an instant that valiant heart stood still with the clutch of destiny. It appeared that a great body of knights and archers, under the English cognizance, concealed behind the Mont de Clairoy, had burst forth, and covered the country between the river and the Burgundian camp. Jeanne's retreat to Compiègne was thus cut off, and at the same moment the Burgundians, rallying under the commands of their celebrated but ferocious general, John of Luxembourg, count de Ligny, assailed her in front.

The most courageous of the Maid's adherents were terrified, and she alone preserved her resolution. "Peace to your clamorous tongues—nothing is lost if your hearts fail not! There are but English between us and Compiègne—charge and regain the city!" she exclaimed.

She turned her charger's head as she spoke, and perceived with a deep pang of foreboding, that it was lamed and bleeding at the foot with a calthrop, or iron spike, purposely set in the ground. Her soldiers, however, saw clearly there was no hope for them but in flying from the Burgundians, and breaking through the English ambush. Jeanne's steed was a noble animal, the last vestige of the glorious garniture conferred upon her by the king when she first took the field for him, and with a natural sagacity and spirit seemed to understand and second its rider's object. Vanquishing the anguish of his bleeding foot, the gallant war-steed put forth his speed so heartily, that Jeanne, as usual, headed the returning charge of her squadrons.

On this occasion, and for the first time, Jeanne was personally encountered, crossing spears with a knight who rode heavily before a body of archers. Luckily he was a very awkward chevalier, so unaccustomed to the weight of his heavy armour that he fell, almost at the touch of Jeanne's lance, to the ground. Scarcely noticing this exploit,

she continued the charge with such violence and speed that she and her troops broke through the whole mass of her opponents, and reached the banks of the Oise.

But though first in charges, Jeanne was always the last in retreat, and, mindful of her old customs as shepherdess of a flock, she checked her speed, and waited while her troops crowded over the drawbridge into Compiègne. The disordered ranks of the English were meanwhile rapidly reformed by the diligence of one who appeared to be a common man-at-arms, being arrayed in the plain armour and crestless morion of that rank. The Burgundians were hastening up; and now, nearly all but the most devoted to her person having crossed the drawbridge, Jeanne yielded to their entreaties and prepared to re-enter the city. But even as her horse set its wounded forefoot on the bridge, a bitter laugh was audible from the tower over it, and it swung up in the air on its chains.

In vain did the Maid and her few attendants call deafeningly to the warders to pause. The bridge stood almost instantly perpendicular, so well was its machinery worked by the zeal of envy and hate. Jeanne then remembered De Flavy's exasperation against her, and turned with a deadly sentiment of fear to ascertain if any chance of escape remained; but at the very moment her gorget was grasped as if in the hold of a smith's vice, and the gloomy tones of Fastolfe gasped forth, though but from the morion of a common soldier,—"Yield, sorceress, yield!—the fiend has deserted thee, and thou art the prisoner of him whom thou hast made infamous enough to be thy worthy executioner!"

There was that in the ghastly glare of the dragon knight and his words more frightful to the prophetic heart of Jeanne than any form of instant death.

"Slay me, if thou wilt; but I will not yield to a recreant and dishonoured knight," she replied.

"No, witch, thou shalt not die an honest death, nor till thou hast confessed thy sorceries!" returned Fastolfe, tearing her from her charger with the violence of a torrent, and plunging his pike, till it was nearly buried, in the breast of her charger.

"Harm her not, my good lord. After all, she is a woman," said a knight, who hurried forward to interpose, and who was the very one she had overthrown on her way. "I bear her no malice, though I am all over as black and blue as an Orleans plum; but it was not so much her fault as this knight's harness, which I have never worn before, nor ever will again. Let her yield to me, who am so brand-new a knight that I may well serve her maidship's turn."

"Yea, I will yield to thee, Wulfstan of Warbois, if thou wilt pledge me thy yeoman's faith, and neither knight nor noble's," said Jeanne, with eagerness, as she recognized her quondam wooer.

"Here is my right hand—let it be a bargain. I was thy prisoner once, and had no cause to complain; and thy ransom will doubtless prove a pretty penny," said the new-made knight, extending his muscular arm and raising Jeanne, while Fastolfe looked on with a countenance convulsed with opposing emotions.

"And art thou, too, gone, my noble steed—my fleet, my bold, my only true comrade of battle," said Jeanne, who saw her charger when she rose, at her feet, weltering and plunging in a pool of crimson gore. The poor animal seemed to know her voice, and raised its glassy eyes towards her, as if imploring the aid she could not yield, made one last struggle to regain its feet, rolled over, and expired.

"Take her to the tent of the duke of Burgundy, Wulfstan," said the dragon knight, after a pause; "he will be glad to see her."

"Yield me to any but Englishmen, and I am content," said Jeanne, and a sudden thought irradiated her features. "Aye, lead me before Philip of Burgundy, and let France speak to him by my voice. There are who have won mightier victories than ever battle achieved, with words!"

The Maid of Orleans was accordingly led by her capturers, and a crowd of soldiers who had gathered to gaze at the marvellous heroine, to the tent of the duke of Burgundy. He had but just arrived with his captains from the position where he had watched the event of the ambush, and was looking, with indignation painted on all his features, at his trampled banner, which a herald was exhibiting while describing the particulars of its maltreatment.

The duke was easily recognizable by his resemblance in features to the royal race of Valois from which he sprung, and by the deep mourning he continued to wear for his slaughtered father, John the Fearless. A degree of benevolence and equanimity in his countenance gave some authority for the epithet of the Good, conferred upon him by his courtiers. He wore over his armour the collar and decoration of a singular order he had recently instituted, styled the Golden Fleece, as did nearly all the retinue of great nobles who entered the tent with him. Among these was the count de Ligny, infamous, in spite of great military achievements, by his after conduct to the Maid of Orleans. The savage expression of his countenance answered to his character, though it was, perhaps, in a measure due to the loss of one eye, and a ghastly transverse scar over his nose, cheek, and brow.

There was another personage in the retinue of Duke Philip, a knight of noble birth, who, possessing the rare faculties (in personages of that quality) of reading and writing, enjoyed the special favour of the prince, and accompanied him as a kind of private secretary. It was Enguerrand de Monstrelet, the chronicler of the age.

"And this is the insolent ribaude who dared to dishonour my ensign thus?" exclaimed the duke, after gazing at the prisoner for a minute in amazed and wrathful silence.

"The murderess of Franquet d'Arras, an excellent soldier and gentleman of my wife's lineage!" shouted the count of Ligny.

"No marvel, no marvel, since she is the paramour of a murderer—of Charles of Valois," said the duke, with much agitation.

"None of these things am I, but Jeanne the Maid," she replied, with a calm courage that abashed her assailants for an instant. "And art thou, duke, that Philip of Valois who so unnaturally avengest the wrongs of thy father by rending the entrails of thy mother, of that

France whose royalest blood flows in thy veins, and which yet thou art never weary of shedding? Art thou that grandson of our king who desires to place a stranger on their throne—that duke of Burgundy who longs to be a vassal of tyrannous and mastering England—that count of Flanders who would make the ever-rebellious commons of England his kinsfolk and allies?"

"I am—that Philip, whose father was assassinated at the bridge of Montereau-faut-Yonne," replied the duke, in a singularly wavering tone.

"Let us not listen to her, sir; she has magic on her tongue as well as sword," said De Ligny. "My lord, I claim her as my prisoner,—paying a suitable fee to the knight that grappled her—inasmuch as she was taken in my quarters."

"Thou shalt have her, John; and keep her safely," replied the duke.

"But, my lords, we of England accuse her of necromancy and devilry, and we are her first capturers! Let her appear to answer these charges ere she be released on any ransom," said the dragon knight, in a broken, hollow whisper, which was yet distinctly heard by the whole audience.

"I will put her in the market—bid France, bid England! He who bids the last shall have her!" said De Ligny. "I lost mine eye in looking into one of her towns, to see what preparations awaited a visit, and it is but fair that she should help to pay the surgery."

"Nay, sirs, by your fair leaves, she is my prisoner, and I should see that no harm is done to her," said honest Sir Wulfstan Warbois.

"Nay, I release thee from thy plight: I am safer in Burgundian than in English hands; and nothing do I doubt that France will ransom me, if need be, with a mountain of gold," said Jeanne, eagerly. "But, ere I depart, let me speak once more to this puissant duke, whereto I have, as to mine other deeds, a divine commission; for, now I perceive what our Lady meant when she said that I should this day lead the arch-enemy of France a prisoner. Because thou art so royal, and of the blood of Charlemagne, she willed not that a peasant girl should vanquish thee, to whom it hath yet been given to hurl the Plantagenet from his usurped seat. But the event of this battle shall be better and more healing still for France, if thou listenest, Philip, to these words of reason from my lips. Abandon these foes of France and of thine own blood, of thy realms, of thy glory, of thy very name! Accept the atonement offered thee by Charles of Valois, for a rash deed; for Heaven itself demands only penitence and restitution—to forgive. And hasten while there is yet time, for I tell thee—and the future is unrolled before me like the scrolls that wise men read—never, never while the lilies flourish in France shall the leopard couch on its blessed soil as his lair, in peace and possession!"

"Take her away, she troubles me—the sorceress troubles me!" said Philip the Good, turning away, but with thoughts in his breast which afterwards, indeed, worked more fatally for the interests of England than the loss of many fields like that fought before Compiègne.

"These were brave speeches to put in my history, after the manner of Titus Livius," mused the chronicler, Enguerrand de Monstrelet. "But, sithence they might offend my lord the duke to be put in perpetual memory—I must needs forget them."

CHAPTER XXXII.

ROUEN.

"Look, who comes here!—a grave unto a soul;
Holding the eternal spirit, against her will,
In the vile prison of afflicted breath."—*Shakspeare.*

It was some time after the fatal episode of Compiègne, that Rouen became the scene of the catastrophe of the grand and terrible drama which, for the first time in the history of mankind, a woman enacted on the stage of the world. The duke of Burgundy and the count de Ligny delayed compliance with the solicitations of the English to have the Maid delivered to their vengeance for a period, partly because the former at least had some scruples of conscience on the subject, and the latter hoped to raise the price of the cruel sale, by interposing difficulties, and playing one party against the other. But finding that the French made no offers of ransom, John of Luxembourg at length, to his eternal infamy, completed a bargain with the English Regent, and Jeanne was delivered up to the tender mercies of the enemies she had provoked so bitterly.

The Burgundian duke and count found a convenient cover for the injustice and cruelty of their deed, under pretext that they surrendered her not to the English but to the Church, which ostensibly, and by the mouth of Pierre Cauchon, bishop of Beauvais, demanded her on charges of sorcery and heresy. Jeanne's position as a prisoner of war must else have protected her from the meditated vengeance, and it had become a necessity of the barbarous and vindictive policy of the English leaders to sacrifice her. Until her open destruction might remove the terrors entertained by the soldiers of her magic powers, it was impossible to hope to retrieve the great disasters she had inflicted on the cause of Henry VI. The panic had even crossed the seas, and spread so fast in England that it was found useless to attempt making levies for the wars of France among the warlike and valiant commons, who usually thronged to them with delight. The sorceress must be removed ere the Regent could hope to recruit his thinned and defeated hosts. His principal means of holding the parts of France still remaining in his grasp, were derived from the consent of Cardinal Beaufort to delay for a period the passage of his army through France, marching on a crusade against the heretics of Bohemia. But the uncertain and imperious temper of the prelate rendered his aid at once unacceptable and doubtful.

The city of Rouen was at this time almost entirely in the hands of the cardinal's troops, as might easily have been discerned on the day when the expected arrival of the bishop of Beauvais with his destined victim required the display of military precautions. The city walls, the towers and ramparts of the massive castle, and the long, narrow, winding streets of Rouen, were lined with archers and men-at-arms, bearing, in addition to the red cross of England, the white cross of a crusade quartered with it, so as to compose a parti-coloured star, on the breast and back. The rich cardinal, though usually avaricious, had lavished his wealth on the equipment and garniture of these soldiers, whose services in suppressing the great heresy of the Hussites, he intended should form the steps of his ascent to the papal throne.

It seemed as if the city was in expectation of an attack from some mighty enemy. The populace were only permitted to gaze through a wall of spearmen and bowmen, on the anticipated spectacle. Every point of strength, the corners of the streets, the most important houses, were occupied by English soldiery. The castle, on the river side, was diligently guarded by an armed flotilla of barges; on the land side, by a potent body of troops who filled the street before the great gate, drawn up in battle-array. And yet the enemy expected was only one unarmed and captive woman! Nor was there much reason to dread the temper of the people of Rouen, or any attempt at a rescue. They shared the general apathy and ingratitude of the nation, or were too thoroughly subdued by the terror of the English occupation to distinguish themselves honourably by displaying any dangerous zeal on behalf of the betrayed heroine. Moreover it is in the nature of men (and certes Frenchmen are no exceptions to the rule) to desert the deserted; and her recent ill success, and the direful reports circulated against Jeanne d'Arc, kept opinion wavering, or at least furnished excuses to those numerous critics who judge by events.

And captive as she was, the Maid of Orleans had not yet altogether lost her might of superstitious terror. Fear was visible in the blanched cheeks and anxious eyes of the cardinal's soldiery, who had seen none of her prodigies, and were fortified by being, as they believed, enlisted in the cause of God and of true religion. The French populace themselves, who had reason to believe that she was their friend and protectress, shrunk back in alarm even in the narrow spaces left them to occupy, when the procession escorting their victim entered the walls of Rouen. The intensity of the public curiosity was vanquished for several instants by the involuntary sympathy which men in masses feel with each other, and the terror of the English soldiery passed by an electric communication amidst their Norman allies or subjects.

A strong escort under mingled Burgundian and English banners was first discerned, about the centre of which came the bishop of Beauvais, riding a snow-white mule, and in the most magnificent robes and insignia of his high spiritual dignity. There was little akin to it in the stern vindictive expression of his countenance,

lighted by a glare of triumph which gave its flushed sharp features a brightness it needed no great stretch of fancy to imagine reflected from the flames of the abyss.

Behind the prelate, attired in a male apparel of coarse mourning, supplied by the charity of her vendors, mounted astride on a miserable hack, with her ankles chained beneath its belly, came the once glorious Maid of Orleans. Her dark hair had now grown long and wildly matted, overhanging the deadly pallor of her brows and cheeks like cypress on a tomb. There was a settled hopelessness in her eyes, a fathomless tranquillity of despair in their depths, united with a resignation and fixed endurance of expression that seemed past the power of bodily suffering or mental anguish to perturb.

Nevertheless Jeanne d'Arc herself became appalled at the terror her presence infused. Wherever her eye wandered men shrunk and cowered as if from the gaze of a panther broken loose and selecting its prey with a bloodthirsty glare. And yet a fearful smile played on her lips at some wild thoughts that passed through her mind, and something of scorn glimmered in their purple and swollen outline. But even that last vestige of colour vanished from them, when she came in sight of the grisly masses of the castle of Rouen, and its vast gloomy gates, flanked by two towers crowded with English soldiery whose bows were drawn to the arrow-heads. "Rouen, Rouen! must thou be my last abode—must I perish here?" broke in a faint, unconscious murmur from her lips, as the strong portal opened at the summons of her escort, and a knight, commanding what seemed to be a chosen body of men-at-arms, with two jailors with their keys attending him on each side, appeared to receive them.

"Sir Wulfstan de Warbois, knight, and thou, John Fastolfe, man-at-arms—to this purpose specially appointed by my lord the king—I deliver this prisoner into your hands," said Cauchon, "strictly advising and commanding you, as ye shall answer on your heads to the said my lord the king and to me, that ye keep her in safe custody, and suffer no one to see her without special permission from us to that effect. And thereto pledge us your hands and oaths."

The degraded dragon knight extended his hand with wild and feverish eagerness, while the exalted ex-verdurer put his out, more slowly and reluctantly.

"How say you, sir bishop?" exclaimed Jeanne, shuddering back from the grasp of Fastolfe. "Methought I was charged with some priestly offence? And therefore I may demand to be placed in a prison of the Church, and not in English hands, nor in this dismal keep."

"Would you deem to be safer with us, Jeanne, than with soldiers?" said the prelate, with a peculiar smile. "But you will be safe enough here; more especially as these to whom I yield ye are well aware of your magic practices, and are on their guard against them. Besides, beggars cannot be choosers, and your time of command is over. See that she be confined in a safe dungeon, messires, where there is not even a rat-hole for escape; for the devil is very subtle, and is called

the Prince of Air, and so may enter, and set the captive at liberty, ere the Church has affirmed her right to dwell abroad."

"Do not touch me; unfetter me, and I will follow ye as patiently as the lamb after the butchers," said Jeanne; and Wulfstan, with evident eagerness, loosened the chain round her feet. She alighted then, but reeled with pain when she touched the ground, the blood having stagnated beneath the thongs that bound her at the ankles. Nevertheless she steadied herself almost instantly, and rejected the proffered aid of the new chevalier with a species of scorn. "Ha, thou art the fellow calling thyself a knight that broke thy plight and gave me to this doom!" she exclaimed. "Lead on! I had rather take a frosted serpent for my prop, and thaw its venomed jaws as I went, with mine hand."

Wulfstan make no reply, but looked at once disconcerted and angry, without seeming well to know wherefore he was either. He muttered something, beckoned to the jailors, and set his prisoner and escort in motion towards a low iron door which seemed to lead into a kind of vault beneath the great keep of the castle.

A personage in the robes of a canon, who had hitherto sedulously remained in the background, now approached the bishop, and saluting him with cringing reverence, announced that the king and his council were assembled in the great hall, and desired to see his reverend lordship immediately on his arrival. After a familiar and yet scornful nod of recognition, Cauchon prepared to comply with this request, dismissed his escort, and ordered the gates to be closed. He then dismounted, nearly crushing the fingers of the canon who reverentially held his stirrup, but who, without giving way to any untimely exhibition of suffering, humbly raised the train of the prelate's long mantle, and carried it until he arrived in the royal presence. Cauchon then snatched it somewhat rudely away, waved his hand in unceremonious dismissal, and with an imperious "No farther, master Perrinet!" entered the chamber where the council was assembled.

The presence-chamber of the inheritor of two mighty monarchies was adorned with suitable magnificence, and the childish sovereign himself was exalted on a high throne at the head of the council-board, nearly smothered in robes of royal state. Henry VI. was at this period about nine years old, but he had already a long, melancholy face, as if oppressed with thoughts far beyond his years, and greatly resembled his grandfather, the mad Charles VI., whose malady he was destined at a later season to inherit. A natural weakness and gloom of mind was deepened in Henry VI. by the severe monastic education in which Cardinal Beaufort had reared him, and which was much better adapted to form an anchorite or a devotee than a king.

The cardinal himself sat on the young prince's right hand, a place of honour ceded to him by the politic politeness of the Regent Bedford, usually a special stickler for the rights of his station. His fierce irascible countenance, and scarlet robes richly adorned with jewels, gave Beaufort more the aspect of an angry king than of a priest. And choler and vehement passions were so habitual with this

great prelate, that though at the moment pleased and soothed with the universal deference paid to his opinions, their expression was predominant in his countenance.

The Regent sat on the opposite side of the young king, and the principal personages of the English council of France filled the long benches round the remainder of the table. Talbot, Warwick, Suffolk, Scales, Stafford, were among the number, nearly all personal enemies of Jeanne d'Arc, on account of her victories over them, or through resentment of the shame brought on the order to which most of these illustrious peers belonged, in the person of the dragon knight.

Bedford started up with unusual quickness when the bishop entered, and exclaimed with a visible doubtfulness of look, "Is the witch safely lodged, my lord? If so, you are very welcome—and the French the most disloyal knights and companions of arms in the world."

"She is lodged where the devil himself, her master, will have rare difficulty to win access—as deep below these towers as they are above their base," replied Cauchon.

"Sire, this is your faithful and loving subject, the bishop of Beauvais—wherefore doth your highness cross yourself?" said Bedford, with perhaps some intentional sarcasm in the abrupt query.

"Against the witch, uncle, not against the holy bishop, whose blessing I ask," replied the devout child-king.

"Certes, there was no occasion, sire," said the Regent, with a saturnine smile. "But your highness may wait for a blessing until his reverend lordship is of still loftier eminence in the Church, for I intend to recommend him, for his valuable services, to the vacant archbishopric of Rouen, which doubtless his holiness——"

"Fair and softly, cousin; never pay beforehand!" interrupted Cardinal Beaufort. "The service lags that comes after the fee; as of late the parliament of Oxford found it when your brother the Protector promised certain matters for certain moneys, which are still but promises."

"Gloucester will keep his word, though he promised things impossible, my lord cardinal!" said Talbot, vehemently. "But let that pass to its own time, and let us hear the particulars of this loyal bishop's embassy. By heaven, I would not have done as Burgundy and John of Luxembourg have thought meet, for all the gold yet coined—were she ten times a witch!"

"And that remains for proof, noble and puissant lord!" said Cauchon with affected mildness. "But it was well I let no grass grow under my feet on the way. The fiend tempted her to despair when she heard she was to be delivered to the judgment of the Church, and she leaped from a high tower in the castle of Beaurevoir, even as the bewitched swine of old rushed into the sea of Galilee. But heaven interfered to prevent her escaping the just punishment of her hideous offences, if she is guilty, and to make her fiery stake a beacon of warning to mankind, and specially to womankind, whose weakness of body inclines them to seek preternatural aid more than our stronger and self-relying sex! She had learned to leap the

rocks during her shepherd life, and fell deftly into a ditch, and so was little hurt. But the splash alarmed the warders, and the shock of the muddy waters stunned her, so that she was easily retaken."

"It were marvellous pity had she perished so, or escaped!" said the Regent. "Our English will never recover their noble courage, who were wont to vanquish the French with their eyes at a distance, until she is punished, and shown by manifest signs to have lost her devil-lent powers! If you can fairly prove her a sorceress, sir bishop, still more is done for the good of these realms, inasmuch as it will bring eternal discredit on the arms and cause of Charles of Valois, to have employed those of hell against Christian men; and he will thereby be proved a heretic and disciple of the fiend, and so most unworthy to wear a crown!"

"Be quick at the work too, reverend brother, for my conscience pricks me full evilly at times for playing truant, on so holy an errand as this of my war against the Hussites!" said Cardinal Beaufort.

"I deem her not untainted with the errors of that damnable root of the heresy of the Bohemians, Wicliff; wherefore, your most reverend lordship may be said to be fulfilling your errand in pausing to inflict this chastisement," said Cauchon. "Moreover, as your eminence intends to take Sir John Fastolfe for your captain in this holy war, his honour should in the first place be fairly cleared, which cannot be unless this woman is proved a sorceress, who constrained his flight by magic spells."

"It is true, and I will tarry till doomsday to see her punished!" returned the choleric cardinal. It was scarcely possible to place Jeanne in a more irritating light in his eyes, than thus. Fastolfe had been an inmate and pupil of his household, in his childhood, when he was intended for the Church. His submission and implicit reverence for its decrees and servitors, strongly recommended him to the imperious prelate as a general of skill who would obey his will in all things. Fastolfe's disgrace was thus a matter of personal feeling with him; and the insinuation that Jeanne shared the heresy of Wicliffe, however improbable, was sufficient to irritate a man whose designs on the spiritual sovereignty of the world made him regard it in the light of a treason against himself.

"I shall make no unnecessary pause, my lord," said Cauchon, in reply to the impetuous orders of the cardinal to hasten his proceedings as much as possible. "The scattered flocks of Rouen need but too much a shepherd to suffer delays. I mean, that justice is slow and unwilling to strike, above all the justice of the Church, which hath ever a leaning to mercy. But I have lost no time, and have already such reports from her own country and kinsfolk as confirm the worst suspicions. Even her ancient father—I shudder to say it—in the agony of his grief and fears on learning what had happened, let fall expressions which a cruel duty compelled my commissioners to note and report. Terrible things are told of a fairy tree and fountain near Domremy, that bring dread confirmation to Sir John Fastolfe's testimony, which until now I thought but a wild dream or

vision of distempered fancy! I can now very well believe, and am the better pleased to think how truly I had forgiven and absolved him, that the blow he struck me, and in my person the Church, was rather a malignant provocation of the fiend than his own act. I do but ask, at present, of my lord the king and his royal council to receive my attestations and receipts, and I will proceed at once to an examination of the accused."

The bishop of Beauvais then produced the count de Ligny's acknowledgment for the fifteen thousand saluts d'or, the price of the cruel sale of his prisoner. Cauchon related, with his usual tranquil bitterness and causticity, his bargainings with the avaricious soldier, and the artifices by which the latter varnished his own consciousness of the meanness and atrocity of the act. This harangue was so skilfully prepared, that, while Cauchon made every warrior present blush for the baseness of the count de Ligny, it seemed one continued panegyric on his conduct.

"She freed me ransomless—in truth, as if I were worth none!" muttered Talbot. "But yet to yield her thus—fie on thee, one-eyed rogue! And did none of the ungrateful Frenchmen appear to raise the bargain on you, bishop? None of those kings, and counts, and cities she had redeemed—none offer ransom for her?"

"None: they are all apparently glad to be rid of her!" replied the bishop.

"Then, if her blood weigh not too heavily on us, we will well avenge it on them!" exclaimed the warrior. "Were she an Englishwoman, and had done as much for England as for these thankless French, Talbot would have perished or rescued her ere now. Shame on ye all, that fought with her at Pataye, to have forgotten that she won it for ye!"

"Do not forget, cousin, from whom she won it," said Bedford, drily. "But I marvel little that the dastard assassin of my deceased father-in-law (whose soul, Christ's blood redeem!) should send a woman to fight his battles, and desert her in her need."

"He is too busy toying with the Lady of Beauty to remember what he owes to a dark, sorrow-sallow, peasant wench," returned the bishop.

"Cousins, we have had counsel enow; it is time I were at my Book of Hours, for, see, the sands in the glass are run to the last grain, and the death with his scythe upon it teaches us we must not waste time, not knowing when we may be called to account for it," said the young king, who had been watching a chronometer of the kind indicated, with almost idiotic fixedness. "I must to mine oratory, must I not, uncle Beaufort? And if ye will counsel farther, I will leave my crown on the table, and it will tell me all you have been talking about when I come back."

"My royal liege, our talk is over for the day, and we will not keep you another instant from your prayers," said the Regent, rising. "My lord of Beauvais, all you have done is done well, and highly contents his majesty and the council. You have only to go on as well, and God be your speed, for we ask only justice—and surely nothing but magic

could have given a woman power to undo all that the sword of Henry V. and our long toil of mind and person have wrought, to win this realm of France!"

The appointed judge bowed implicitly, and taking the hint, kissed the young sovereign's hand, and withdrew.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE ARRAIGNMENT.

"And other devils that suggest by treasons,
Do botch and bungle up damnation
With patches, colours, and with forms, being filched
From glistering semblances of piety."—*Shakspeare.*

THE bishop of Beauvais proceeded at once to the chapel of the castle of Rouen, where a convocation of doctors of theology, of various ranks and offices in the Church, were assembled for the trial of Jeanne d'Arc. These were all selected by himself saving the vicar of the inquisitor-general of France, Frater Johannes, who was there by right of his office.

In general the clergy of Normandy were well inclined to the English cause; but surrounded as this tribunal was by bands of infuriate soldiery and leaders, alike eager for the blood of the accused as a means of avenging what they considered their wrongs, and restoring the lustre of their arms, no great impartiality needed to be feared. But Cauchon had also carefully selected the judges for qualities on which he believed he could depend.

Nevertheless, to give a better semblance of justice and fair dealing, the prelate decreed that his court should be an open one; and the chapel of the castle of Rouen was filled ostensibly with those who chose to form the audience. They were chiefly English nobles and knights, with a judicious sprinkling of the superior burgesses of Rouen, whose politics were known.

The formulas of justice, at all events, were very exactly observed. The bishop ascended a species of throne prepared for him on the elevated platform of the altar, after a short devotion to the magnificent silver crucifixion which surmounted it—for it was certainly not to the God of mercy and justice thereon represented—and declared the court to be formed. A breathless silence prevailed, but was three times enjoined, according to custom, by the usher of the court. The bishop then delivered a detailed account of his proceedings to obtain the surrender of the accused from the Burgundians; the letters were read by which the chapter of Rouen conceded to him the privilege of trying his prisoner within the jurisdiction of the vacant archbishopric; the summons to the vicar of the inquisitor-general of France to be present at the trial was certified, and responded to by Frater Johannes in person; the proper officers for the conduct of

he process were named; and one, styled the promoter, was dispatched o summon Jeanne to appear before the tribunal, with as much gravity s if she had any power of refusal.

The promoter returned in a short time, with a disturbed and sur- rised look. It appeared that, having delivered the citation to Jeanne, she answered that she would willingly appear and answer the questions which might be put to her, but she demanded that an equal portion of ecclesiastics of the French party should be mixed with those of England. She also humbly requested that, before appearing in the presence of the tribunal, she might be permitted to attend mass.

"Methinks you might have told her, master dean of the Christianity, that the Church is of no party; that all men are in her eyes children of a common mother," replied the prelate. "That is the answer to her first demand; and for the second, it would be assuming the whole matter at issue, to allow her worthiness to partake of the blessed sacrifice of the mass, which were perhaps to permit a direful worship of fiends and goblins under its holy forms. We have the opinion of many notable doctors and masters of theology, that, considering the crimes of which this woman is accused, and the unseemly garb in which she persists to appear, it doth not become us to grant the privilege she demands."

The promoter instantly acted on these suggestions of the Church, and rapidly shifting his sails, made a formal demand that the accused should not be permitted to share in any religious rites until her acquittal was pronounced, and that she should be brought immediately before the tribunal.

Both demands were granted by the entire court, which, including the inquisitorial vicar, seemed to be governed by the looks of Cauchon. The promoter again disappeared, and returned followed by the accused, who walked between her constant custodians, Fastolfe and the ex-verdurer of Commercy.

Her appearance was but little changed from that she presented in entering Rouen, save that her hair was smoothened on her brows, and there was more of emotion and defiance in her manner. There was an eagerness not altogether unakin to hope in the glance with which she scanned the numerous body of her judges, all clothed in ecclesiastical garbs, either the sumptuous robes of abbots and bishops, or the scarlet caps and robes of doctors of theology, or the white linen albs of canons and deacons. She guessed not how many of the group were her confirmed enemies of the dispossessed chapter of Beauvais, though she recognized with a start the canon Perrinet. He, however, shrunk back, as if by no means desirous of recognition. Jeanne had been bred in religious awe and reverence of everything appertaining to the Church, and aware as she was of the vicious character and demeanour of the bishop of Beauvais, even he in his spiritual capacity shared some portion of her respect. She looked in vain, however, for some friendly or encouraging countenance. The nearest approach to these attributes was visible in the fat, foolish, credulous features of the abbot Ægidius of Fécamp, who stared at her

with the utmost curiosity and wonder. Nearly all the other faces o her judges were either shrouded in monastic cowls, for many of the were Dominicans, chosen in compliment to the inquisitor, a brother that order; or partook of the stern insensibility of his own. Al however, gazed with some degree of awe and astonishment at th marvellous girl before them—perhaps some with suppressed emotion of pity and regret. Cauchon himself was a little staggered, an shrouded his eyes with his hand, when he perceived Jeanne's reverer bend to the crucifix over his throne.

"Jeanne, listen!" he said with a huskiness of tone that only gradu ally wore off as his natural haughtiness regained the ascendancy ove other feelings. "And ye, reverend lords and brothers, know tha this woman was seized and apprehended within the limits of ou diocese of Beauvais, whose many harmful doings against the orth dox faith, not only in our diocese, but throughout all France, ar known and infamous amidst all the nations of Christendom. Lately by the most serene and Christian prince, Henry, king of Englan and of France, she has been delivered to us, that we may proceed against her in a matter of faith according to the rules of law an of justice. And, truly, attending to the common report and rumour which have reached us, as well as to certain informations which w have already communicated to you, having first ripely consulted wit many skilled both in divine and human law, we have commanded th said Jeanne to be cited and called before us, as is our duty, that sh may answer the truth to certain questions relating to matters faith, to be propounded to her, and whatever else it may be just an lawful to do.

"For these reasons, Jeanne, as is the duty of our office, to th preservation and exaltation of the Catholic faith, with the benign ai of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose cause it is, we charitably admonis and require you, for the hastening of the business and the clearin of your conscience, to answer the whole truth to questions that sha be put to you on matters of faith, not seeking subterfuge or cunnin to avoid declaring it. Wherefore we require you judicially to tak an oath in the usual form, with your hand upon the most hol Evangelists, to speak the truth."

A notary stepped forward and offered a magnificent brass-boun bible to Jeanne, who, however, replied without touching it,—

"I know not on what you would question me. Mayhap you ma ask me things which I would not tell you."

"You must swear to speak the truth on those things which sha be asked of you concerning the faith, and what you know," sai Cauchon.

It seemed that Jeanne's suspicions were roused by the peculia carelessness in these latter words.

"I will cheerfully swear to tell ye the truth concerning my fathe and kinsfolk, and of the deeds which I wrought in France," sh replied with firmness. "But the revelations which I have receive from God solely to be divulged to my king, Charles, never will reveal them—no, though ye sever this head from this body wit

hangman's sword! Yet, if ye will leave me time for prayer, I shall now anon, perchance, whether it be the pleasure of those who sent ıe that I should reveal their oracles."

It was in vain that even the crafty Cauchon reiterated his efforts ɔ make her take the oath unconditionally. With the true instinct of er clear intellect she continued to refuse compliance, however his ɛal motive was glossed by the prelate's fair phrases that she was to e required to answer only on matters concerning the faith. It was ith the reiteration of her own proviso that she finally consented to ake the oath, knelt on both knees, and, devoutly kissing the holy ook, pronounced the words of affirmation after the notary.

The bishop of Beauvais imagined he had now secured the main hreads of his web; but he perceived very plainly that he had not ltogether to do with so simple and easily-entrapped a peasant girl as e imagined. Yet fearful were the odds against the noble heroine hen she was now fairly pitted against that crowd of doctors, trained ı all the subtleties of the schools and theology of the times.

Cauchon began by addressing some common-place questions to the ccused, in hope of throwing her gradually off her guard. Her name -her birthplace—where she was baptized—the names of her father nd mother? Jeanne shuddered, but replied in tones of plaintive re- ıiniscence that might have touched any heart but that of the steely ıeologian. And what memories swelled in her bosom, as the heroic ıptive answered those questions, so unmeaning and purposeless to ıost of those present! Jeannette at home—Jeanne in France—Dom- ɛmy, its little church—Jacob and Isabel d'Arc—the tenderness which ad watched her early years—the peaceful village, the tree, the foun- ın, the celestial visions that haunted her young inspirations,—all rose, as if by magic touches, before her, and obliterated for the ıoment the horrors of her present position, the dread glories of her areer, the wrongs she had suffered and must yet endure.

The prelate continued his seemingly harmless questions. According ɔ the custom of her province, Jeanne had several godmothers, whom, alf in tender recollection and half in scorn of the frivolity of the uestion, she enumerated. Cauchon made a private sign to the otaries who were taking minutes of the proceedings, to be at- ɛntive.

"Agnes, Jeanne, and Sibyll!—the last name is ancient, and hath gnificance," said the bishop. "The good old women doubtless loved ou well, and taught you all their skill?"

"In very truth; old Agnes taught me how to spin, and Jeanne to nit; but for poor Sibyll, she was too old to do aught save tell long ales of fairies and hobgoblins and of the blessed saints," replied eanne, with an affecting smile of reminiscence.

"But, girl, it was not from them you learned to wield the lance, to de fierce horses, to overthrow the most valiant knights in battle!" aid Cauchon; "neither could the withered hags show thee how to ɪscinate the hearts of men with a glance, and win them from beauty herewith thine is as little to compare as the wren's to the goldfinch's lumage. But let us proceed in due order. Who baptized you?

What is your age? What prayers know you—and who taught the to you?"

To these questions Jeanne replied without hesitation.

"Truly thou wert a young counsellor and soldier for such a king Charles of Valois, whom you call so," he said with a smile that situated much more than he said. "And it was thy mother—t gossip of all those good old women of the fairy tree—who taug thee all thy theology? Pray you, let us hear you recite your Pat noster!"

Jeanne was very well aware that the power to say this prayer w considered one of the tests of witchcraft, and she replied with a glan of disdain and pride, in a manner which fairly turned the tables the questioner,—

"Hear me in confession, and I will say it willingly! It shall spa you some trouble in the questioning me, if this be all the matter your process."

"Alas, no!—and we fear that even we are not old enough to tr ourselves with a damsel of Messire Charles of Valois's court," turned Cauchon. "But ye note, brethren, she must have some pe liar difficulty, since she declines so simple a request."

"Why fear you me, sir bishop, since you dare trust yourself freely with one whose beauty surpasses mine (I wotted not I h any) as the goldfinch's the wren's?" retorted Jeanne, with flashi eyes.

"She raves; but we have learned to endure calumny," said t bishop, meekly. "Daughter, we will send you one or two nota clerks, speaking the Gallic idiom, in whose presence you shall (if holy words stick not in your throat) recite the Paternoster."

Jeanne replied, as the judge expected, with increased vehemen that she would not utter it to any priest who would not hear her confession.

Maître Jean Beaupère, an eminent theologian, who rarely raised eyes from the ground, now interposed by beseeching Jeanne to swer the truth to some questions he was about to put to her—w whatever reservation she might have sworn!

The noble-hearted and still too loving peasant girl, who dread only that they sought to make her confess matters to the disadv tage of her king, still unshakingly reiterated her refusal.

"Some things you may ask of me on which I will reply the truth on others, not at all. But if ye are well informed about me, ye ou to wish me out of your hands; for I have done nothing but by revc tion."

The questions of Beaupère were ingeniously directed to disco something suspicious in the pursuits of Jeanne's childhood. Obse ing her moved even to tears with the recollections thus evoked fr the grave of the past, his tones became more insidiously gentle. asked her, as it seemed, many harmless questions, concerning her tention to religious duties, and finally to whom she was wont to c fess? She answered that in general she confessed to the curate her parish, but at times to wandering friars and religious mendica

ho visited the district. Among others she mentioned Friar Richard, id related with the utmost candour and simplicity all the particulars ' her first acquaintance with him.

This account, coupled with his habitual scepticism and acuteness of tellect, instantly excited the attention of the bishop of Beauvais. He ldressed so many questions to the accused on this point, that at last eaupère grew impatient at the interruption of what he imagined a uch more critical inquiry. He broke into the prelate's concatenation ' queries in his turn, by abruptly demanding of Jeanne whether she as wont to receive the sacrament at other feasts than Easter, when ıe said she usually communicated. The extreme keenness in the xaminer's eye excited Jeanne's suspicion, and she remembered with isgust and indignation legends of the hideous profanation of the ucharist which was said to take place in the sabbaths of witches and orcerers.

"Pass on!" she replied, with a glance of tranquil scorn.

The theologian was greatly irritated, more especially as he observed ı angular smile steal over Cauchon's features.

"Jeanne," said the prelate, pursuing his own craftier train, "thou ayest that all thou hast done was by revelation. Teach us to believe ıee, and I for one will kneel to thee as to a saint of God, instead of ıthroning myself here as thy judge."

The fire of enthusiasm and hope revived in the soul of the Maid of rleans at these words. She believed in herself so fervently that she ould scarcely imagine how men could doubt her. Hitherto she had ttered little but what a brave and bright intellect might have easily amed, but now she became once again inspired with the eloquence f her marvellous genius. The visions of her young, magnificent, nd overwrought imagination were almost realized in the splendour of ıe words in which she related them. The artful illusion contrived y Friar Richard, steeped in the glories of her fancy, became a scene ıch as only the prophets of old or the most gorgeous dreams of oetry could shape.

The prelate listened with profound but sceptical attention. The bbot Ægidius uttered short fat pants of admiration, while others f the doctors stole timid looks at each other, to ascertain if the mar- el and awe in each man's heart was shared. The chalky visage of ıe aged inquisitor alone betrayed no signs of emotion.

Cauchon was well acquainted with the character and pursuits of riar Richard. He knew that he was devoted to the archbishop of heims, and that he had always followed in the retinue of his war- ke penitent. He inquired innumerable particulars relating to the isitation of the voices that had guided her actions on so many im- ortant occasions. He made these queries with a degree of reverence nd astonishment which even deceived several of the inquisitors, who ent eager hearing. Above all, the abbot of Fécamp, whose only point f spirituality was an insatiable curiosity on the secrets of the other orld, listened as if his two fat cheeks were all ear. And the worthy ignitary continued to cross himself incessantly, while Jeanne related he circumstances of her temptation at the fountain of the fairies,

and the commission to deliver France which she there received from the lips of the archangel Michael. But Cauchon destroyed the coun teraction this ingenuous explanation gave to the dragon knight's version of the scene.

"I like not defences that present themselves before the accusa tion, in the field; it argues a strange consciousness of need," he observed, and proceeded to trace the particulars of her journey to Chinon with great minuteness.

But when once they reached this bourne of her dangerous pilgrim age, and came to the period of her first introduction to the king Jeanne became visibly agitated. Her voice trembled for the first time when she mentioned the name of Charles VII. So mournful a con trast rushed upon her between the young hope and enthusiasm o those days and the anguish and disenchantment of that dreary hour that but for the presence of enemies who might interpret the bitte effusions of grief against her still beloved prince, Jeanne must have yielded to the mighty tide of sorrow in her heart. But whenever she spoke of the king, so beautiful a glow of tenderness seemed to animate all her expressions, that the artful prelate was struck with vague suspicions.

Nay, if you lavish praises thus where they are so ill-deserved, we shall begin to credit the world's usually false whisper concerning the recompense Messire Charles of Valois made your services!" he said sneeringly, "What do you tell us, Jeanne—that the light and purple glory that was wont to surround the angels of your visions was also around this king of yours, when you beheld him first! Was it so? Was there a celestial radiance round Charles of Valois, too, that we may judge if it was not the glow of sulphur?"

"Speak of something else!" said Jeanne, suddenly relapsing from her tone of enthusiasm: the light is darkness now."

But Cauchon had detected the jarring string, and he struck it with a still more dissonant twang.

"And was there any angel near your king when you saw him first —But do not count the Lady of Beauty one," he said.

"Spare me—pass on to something else!" replied the hapless heroine. "Oh, there were beauteous dreams around me then! Truly they were dreams, but such a glory of Heaven clothed all things in its light, that the meanest flower of earth were lovelier then than those of paradise to me now! Bright forms were ever visible to me couch ing in the golden skies of sunset, and something of sweet melody dwelt like a perpetual harmony in mine ears! The very brooks in the deep woodlands sung hymns to me by night, sad and sweet as the angelic harps at twilight, when they lament over another day of human guilt and suffering."

"I never heard them," said Cauchon, coldly. "But did not you gallant young king share these fine visions—did no angelic appari tions visit his amorous repose? Had he not some beautiful illusion which were the counterpart of thine?"

This was indeed opening to its depths the abyss of anguish in

the soul of Jeanne d'Arc; but she answered with even a degree of fierceness,—

"I have told you, bishop, torture shall not wring from me a breath against my king! For what visions may have visited him, his own heart knoweth best; but if ye be curious on the matter, send to the king himself, and let him tell ye."

The prelate gave a smile which had a deeper and more fearful meaning than his more habitual one of sarcasm and contempt, and renewed his investigations relating to the voices. He traced their agency with patient and indefatigable curiosity, as it seemed, through all the occasions wherein they influenced the actions of Jeanne d'Arc, reconciling them in secret with the theory formed in his sagacious and sceptical intellect.

But even the inquisitorial prelate was staggered with the sublime disinterestedness that breathed in her reply to one of the questions he addressed. "And what great reward, what stupendous wealth and honour, did you demand from these obedient and all-powerful sprites?"

"Only the salvation of my soul, of my king, and of France!"

"Well, the fiend hath temptations adapted to all our moods," said the bishop, with a gloomy sigh. "The noble and generous nature is cajoled with—but a woman could never be such a fool! It is impossible! Thou wert glorious, rich, and powerful once; but thou seest how in the end the devil deceives and deserts his servitors. Yet surely there is remorse even in the fiends! Thou sayest that at Rheims the voices counselled thee to lay aside thy fatal arms, and return to the peace of thy village?"

"Ay, indeed, and would I had taken their counsel—I were not now here!" said Jeanne, with infinite sadness. "But I loved France better than myself; and will France desert me now?"

"Doubt it not; France has deserted thee, France and her ungrateful king!" returned Cauchon eagerly. "Else how art thou here? John of Luxembourg openly declared that he would sell thee to the highest bidder, were it the devil himself."

"If this be so, then could I almost deem, as ye say, that fiends have deceived me!" exclaimed Jeanne. "But, no; ye tell me this thinking to crush my soul, too. He has exhausted heaven and earth to redeem me; but your vengeance conceals it from me!"

"I swear to thee, Jeanne, by that cross on which thine eyes are now fixed, the Dauphin hath never so much as whispered in thy behalf," returned Cauchon.

"His treasury is exhausted; he could not believe ye would do what ye are doing, so cruel 'tis!" said Jeanne. "It cannot be, I tell ye; never will I believe it from your enemy lips! I gave him his crown, and he loved me once. The cities I have redeemed, the prisoners I have set at liberty, will pawn their very children to ransom me! The chivalry of France, albeit they envied me—can they forget who rescued them from their shame and ruin?"

"Those of England do not; but, by holy Paul, I pity thee, if

thine hopes lean on these broken reeds," replied Cauchon. "Which of those who have served him has not Charles of Valois betrayed? Even Taneguy Duchâtel, who saved his life, and staked his immortal soul to rid him of his enemy—him he has abandoned. But let us continue the matter of the process. Ah! was it not on a festival day that you made your attack on Paris?"

"It was on the feast of our Blessed Lady, too well I remember," replied Jeanne, musing sorrowfully, but rather on what had been said than on the circumstances of her first great disaster.

"Truly, no saint bade thee break another's festival, unless there be envy and brotherly malignity in the celestial hierarchy too," said Cauchon, with a bitter smile among his surrounding brethren. "But some of us seem faint and aweary; our brother of Fécamp gasps for breath. What we have done suffices for the day. Let her be withdrawn; but first we warn thee, Jeanne, do not attempt to escape from this castle of Rouen, without our leave, under pain of conviction of the crime of heresy."

"This command will I not receive," returned Jeanne. "I am a bird of the woods, and so it be possible for me to spread my wings, and flee from my cage, deem ye I will not? So, if I escape, none can reproach me with breaking my faith, for none will I pledge."

"Then it will be necessary to secure the criminal—I mean, the accused—with chains and fetters of iron," said the vicar inquisitor, speaking for the first time in tones that sounded like the rasping of a file.

"Ay, and but lately you did endeavour to escape from your prison," said Cauchon. "And with the end that your jailers may not fear some magic to be used against them, and that your earthly part may be kept to undergo what punishment it may have merited, we order you to be secured with a ring and fetters of iron."

Jeanne shuddered, but she replied with unabated spirit, "Then ye fear me still—even in my dungeon—Englishmen! But it is true; I sought and I will still seek to be free; base as his jailer's, is the soul that would not. But where, in all your laws, do ye find it is unlawful for a prisoner, unjustly confined, to escape if he can?"

No reply was made to this query but a signal from the bishop to Jeanne's guardsmen and jailers to remove her, which they complied with amidst a strangely jarring and contending murmur among the audience. Cauchon then arose, and declared the session over, in which his iron puppet of the inquisition, Frater Johannes, agreed, and the assembly broke up.

Making a gesture, which the canon Perrinet observed and was reluctantly compelled to obey, the prelate retired into the sacristy of the chapel, as if to despoil himself of his rich but burdensome robes. The canon followed his lord with a very slight degree of satisfaction, indeed, anywhere but in his countenance, which he strove to dress in all the appearances of that sentiment.

"And how have matters gone in my absence? Hast thou watched over my beautiful prisoner with the lynx-eyed care thou didst promise?" he said, in a voice of extreme calmness.

"Yea, my good lord; she hath not stirred from the palace. But I needed to exercise no constraint," replied Perrinet. "Say what she will, my dear lord, I do believe she has a kind of affection for you; for she moped in your absence like a nightingale that has lost its mate."

"Thou liest, triple rogue! thou liest like a very clerk of Paris, thou Burgundian Armagnac!" returned Cauchon, yielding to a burst of absolutely fiendish rage. "I saw her among the audience disguised as one of my notaries. Dost thou think I should fail to recognize her beautiful hand and eyes, were they ten times as thickly muffled? Hasten, and tell the young notary, who sate by thy side, that the bishop of Beauvais commands his instant presence here."

The canon Perrinet stared for an instant as if thunderstruck, and then, bending almost to his high-latched shoes, shot out of the enraged gaze of his lord, as if he perceived his only chance of safety lay in obedience.

"Honey-tongued traitor!—and I will learn some day where thou wert, when absent on thy pilgrimage to Corbeil," muttered the indignant prelate, and he continued to pace the sacristy in his pompous robes like an angry peacock, until the door opened, and the cringing canon re-entered with the false notary and real baroness of Commercy. She came with a quick and defiant step, in strong contrast with that of her accomplice; and, when the prelate imperiously commanded him to retire, greatly to the canon's surprise, she seconded the disobliging request in the same tone. He withdrew.

"Lady!—and is this the word you plighted me, when I went to bring your enemy to judgment?" said Cauchon, angrily, and yet with extreme tenderness in his tones, as Melusine threw back her cowl, and looked at him with a fearless composure he had not often remarked in her manner when left alone with him. She was much altered. The gay and coquettish character of her beauty, its florid freshness, had all vanished. She was very pale, and an expression of cruelty, fierceness, and determination knit all its once soft and feminine lines.

"I have not left the palace as Melusine de Commercy, thou seest; I am here as a sworn notary of the Palace of Justice of Rouen," she replied, with a wild, scornful laugh. "But, no, my lord bishop and count! I have less occasion or desire now than ever to deceive thee. Listen: I will tell all the truth. I have been forth as Melusine de Commercy; I have seen the English knight, and by connivance of yonder villain, your friend and servant! Never clench those sinewy hands thus—he has deserved more than pardon—recompense at thy hands, if 'tis true thou lovest me! Yes, I have seen Fastolfe. I have knelt at his feet—I have implored him to believe in my innocence—to take pity on me! I have confessed that love for him kept me pure, even in the power of the bishop of Beauvais. I have degraded myself below even mine own contempt—and he, degraded recreant as he is, he spurns me—he refuses to believe my story!—says 'tis nought to him, if true; and for sole reply, resigns

that half-share in my ransom which even thou dost now admit is his right—that he may the sooner be quit of the sight of me for ever, doubtless!"

"Well; it is very well. Thou wilt begin to believe me now, that he never cared for thee so much as I value the meanest thing that has ever been in thy presence," returned Cauchon.

"Nay; it is the spell of the witch that is still upon him! Oh! well I know he loved me ere in evil hour she fixed her baleful eye of fascination on him!" said the despised beauty, kindling with the fiercest jealousy and fury. "I saw it to-day—despite of all the wrongs, the shame, the degradation she has brought upon him, didst thou not mark with what compassionate and quivering eyes he gazed upon her?"

"I noted him not, and methinks, lady, it is your fondness for this recreant that makes you over hastily judge your rival to be a sorceress, as the foolish vulgar and cowards deem her!" replied the prelate, bitterly.

"She is a sorceress! What but magic could have made a recreant of so noble and famous a chevalier?" said Melusine, with flashing eyes, full of fury and revenge.

"His own cowardice and old woman fancies," replied Cauchon, exceedingly piqued. "For from all I have heard this day, I am thoroughly convinced this noble peasant girl, your victorious rival, and the affrighter of your beloved dastard, has been made the instrument of a sacrilegious mummery. I do most strongly suspect that your good uncle and my good friend, the archbishop duke of Rheims, has played a contrivance upon her which, if discovered, will go far to procure his degradation from that usurped throne that should have been mine. Those early visions of hers were the dreams of a fervid and bright fancy; but marked you not how, ever after Friar Richard joins the march of events, her hallucinations become palpable, rational things—speak to her clear, intelligible, politic advisements? I remember the man when he was in Paris, and how skilled he was in religious pageants, and with what perfection he could enact the persons of saints and apostles, so as to dazzle for awhile seared and unbelieving eyes—how much more a simple, credulous country wench! Since you have been so liberal in your confidence to me, dame, I care not if in return I tell you I am determined to sift this matter to the bottom, even if I prove Jeanne innocent of aught but her glory and triumphs!"

"No, no!—hear me, Cauchon!" said the lady of Commercy, with extreme agitation. "She is guilty—Fastolfe's love is a sufficient proof! I must not bring my father's brother to disgrace and ruin—I have grieved him enough already. Hear me! I am lost in men's opinion by my foolish coquetry; I have no witnesses, no means, no hopes, to convince Fastolfe to the contrary. I will not return to the court of France to become its jest. Thou lovest me, thou art wise, thou art rich, thou art powerful. Hear me—but let me whisper it! Bring Jeanne to justice as the sorceress she is, and, by her condemnation, clear Fastolfe's honour and my uncle of Rheims—and

I—I will remain your prisoner all my days—remain what you would have me; what until now it hath been my soul's abhorrence but to deem possible!"

Joy and triumph lighted up Cauchon's visage with more brilliancy than an actual beam of sunshine upon it could have done, but still a degree of doubt lingered in his suspicious heart, and qualified its rapture.

"It is true," he replied, hesitatingly, "it is true that I should fear by an exposure of our intriguing metropolitan to bring general doubt on the holy mysteries and miracles of the Church. And true it is that, on the other hand, there is heavy matter of suspicion against the woman of Domremy. But thou hast played and trifled with my love so long, Melusine, how can I believe this song of paradise at last?"

"Name to me any oath and any pledge, and I will take it!" replied the revengeful lady of Commercy.

"Nay, thou shalt share the deed, and put it into my power to reveal the archbishop's blasphemous artifices, if thou betrayest my hopes again," said Cauchon. "We will discover by thy means whether human or superhuman agency inspired the madness of Jeanne d'Arc. The guilt of her credulity and of the blood she has shed will yet remain upon her, and 'tis like enough, that, though wearing angelic forms, appearing to her at a place of demons and sorceresses, she must have deemed they were such in disguise. Melusine, thou hast a voice sweeter than any angel's. Go by night, accompanied with some such pretty-coloured light around thee, as she prates of, and speak to her through her dungeon-bars. Hearten her up, as is the fashion of the fiend, to answer us, her judges, boldly and defyingly; assure her of certain redemption from our hands, and tell her that thou art St. Margaret (for it seems not that she ever saw that holy dame, in proper person), come to comfort her in captivity!"

"I will do it!" replied the jealousy-maddened lady of Commercy. "You are a doctor of the sacred page, Cauchon; you know if this be written there—and I will do it."

"Everything is lawful to discover the truth, sweetest Melusine," replied Cauchon gallantly. "And with the prospect of so mighty a reward, doubt not I shall prosecute the cause with zeal."

"My lord," said the canon, opening the door of the sacristy, where he had been for some time vainly, but fearfully, listening, "the king and the cardinal are coming into the chapel to hear vespers. I know not whether you desire an audience of his highness and his governor now?"

"Certes, no!—Perrinet, I am not angry with thee," replied Cauchon, tendering his hand to escort the young notary forth. "Do not tremble so aspenly: I tell thee, man, I am not angry—but well pleased and content to think thou hast betrayed me—to my good!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE TRIAL OF JEANNE D'ARC.

"As hooded ounces cling to the driven hind."—*Shelley.*

NEARLY the same personages as on the first occasion reassembled on the following day for the trial of the Maid of Orleans. But whether from fear of some revelation not fit for the general ear, or for some other reason, Cauchon ordered the cause to be proceeded with in a chamber adjoining the hall of the Castle of Rouen, where an extremely select audience only was admitted.

There was something indeed so palpably unjust and oppressive, even to the vulgarest view, in the spectacle of so many learned theologians and doctors arrayed against one untutored peasant woman, strong only in natural wisdom, who did not even know how to read, and who had only studied divinity in that magnificent and ever-open tome which the God of nature has spread before the eyes of all mankind, that the bishop of Beauvais was right in apprehending the sympathy of the people might be roused. He himself scarcely knew wherefore he had formed so numerous a tribunal, unless it was from a vague idea that the multitude of the sharers would diminish with each the aggregate of guilt.

He could not, however, suppress the pangs of conscience altogether, when he beheld the prisoner enter with a demeanour elate and proud in her illusive confidence in the renewal of the celestial protection communicated by the false St. Margaret. One of the notaries, seated beside the inquisitor, was also observed to tremble. The dullest of her judges wondered at the change, and even the abbot Ægidius, in his secret mind, compared her to the painting of the young St. Sebastian perishing of innumerable wounds amidst a glory from heaven, in the great missal of his church of Fécamp.

After a short inward rally, the bishop returned to his former effort with revived zeal. He exhorted the prisoner to swear, simply and absolutely, to reveal the whole truth on all matters relating to the accusation and evil reports against her. Jeanne replied calmly, that she had sworn sufficiently on the previous day, and that it ought to suffice.

"Give me fair leave to speak," she added with vivacity. "By my faith, ye may ask me things which I will not tell to ye!"

"No one, not even a sovereign prince, can refuse to be sworn in a matter concerning the faith!" said the inquisitor, Frater Johannes, in his cold, rocky tone; "how much less a vassal and ignorant country girl."

"These are not the names by which I shall be known to future men!" replied Jeanne. "I swore to ye yesterday—deem ye oaths are remembered so short a time? Ye press upon me too much."

"Nay, not we, indeed!" said Cauchon. "You are witty, Jeanne, and for the most part those of your sex that are so, are not wise. Some dark depth must be in your soul, that you ever refuse to let the buckets of the Church descend into it to draw up waters for our judgment."

"You may see to the depths of pure waters, without that trouble, messire," replied the country girl. "On matters of faith, I will speak to the best of my poor knowledge. But if ye seek to make me speak evil of my king, or reveal his secrets, I will not."

"Alack, this is faith in woman indeed, to keep a secret! But I have heard ye can, when it also concerns yourselves," said Cauchon. "And for thine own sake, I warn thee; what will thy judges think, what must we needs think, of this refusal?"

Several of the judges, conceiving themselves called upon for a display of zeal, began to speak at the same instant. "One at a time, good fathers!" said Jeanne, with a smile. "Ye override each other, like too eager hounds. What would ye have? Ye may ask of me questions concerning my revelations which I may not answer ye: for certes, reverend men, ye would not desire me to perjure myself? And I say to ye, look well to it—ye who call yourselves my judges—for I have heard that he who judges shall be judged. Ye take on yourselves a great burden, and oppress me too much with my share. It is enough that I have sworn once."

"You then refuse to swear, simply and absolutely?" said Cauchon.

"Ye may well pass on; I have sworn, and that suffices. He who breaks one oath breaks all," returned Jeanne. "No clerk of Rouen, nor of Paris, can condemn me, unless unjustly! Of all that concerns my mission, I will speak the truth willingly, but not concerning all things; nor indeed could the space of many days suffice to speak all the memories of those times."

"At least take the advice of the reverend lords and learned doctors present, whether you should swear, and how," said Cauchon, whose own curiosity was piqued by this obstinacy. "Surely you do not deem us all destitute of conscience or science?"

"Of mine own deeds I will speak the truth as freely as streams pour their waters from rocks! Let us speak no more of this," returned Jeanne.

"Mark you, daughter! you render yourself suspected, if you will not swear to speak the truth," said Frater Johannes.

"I am suspected; else wherefore am I here? or am I already condemned?" retorted the prisoner.

"Again I warn you to swear precisely and absolutely!" said Cauchon, observing the effect produced by her obstinacy, with satisfaction.

"I will willingly speak the truth that I know, yet not all! My errand is from God; refer me to Him from whom I came!" said the Maid, now chafed into anger.

"Dost thou deny the jurisdiction of the Church?" exclaimed Frater Johannes, also roused from his usual apathy of age and cruelty. "Once more, obstinate girl, thou art warned to swear under pain of being held guilty of the crimes imputed to thee!"

"Let us hear what they are?" replied Jeanne, with military frankness.

"For the last time I warn and beseech thee, Jeanne! Thou art exposed to great peril by this obstinate recusancy!" said Cauchon.

"I fear it not; the saints of God are with me!" replied the Maid, "I am prepared to answer the truth on all matters relating to your charges of heresy and magic. What more would ye?"

"Who has told thee that these are our charges, Jeanne?" said the bishop. No charge has in your hearing, that I wot of, been made against you."

"They told me so who told me I was no longer safe on a pledged knightly word, as a prisoner of war," replied Jeanne; and Sir Wulfstan Warbois uttered a startled sigh, resembling the snort of a wild boar disturbed in its lair.

Finding that no advantage was gained in this long skirmish, or perhaps satisfied with fixing in the minds of the judges the fact of her obstinate refusal to take an unconditional oath, Cauchon permitted her to be sworn in the form she herself had framed.

Beaupère, according to a previous arrangement among the inquisitors, now resumed the examination. He began apparently at a remote point, by inquiring when she had last eaten or drunk? The extraordinary splendour in the prisoner's eyes perhaps induced the question. But Jeanne replied that she had fasted since yesterday at noon, without either eating or drinking.

"Is it thus you prepare yourself for spiritual visitations?" said Cauchon. "No ill way—to enfeeble the body and so the mind. When did you last hear the voice that haunts you?"

"Last night, and to-day—if it be day that visits yonder dungeon where I sleep, which seems but a paler night," replied Jeanne, with a bright irradiation all over her countenance.

"In what hour of the day or night, my child?" said the abbot of Fécamp, with intense curiosity.

"Time comes not into your dungeons, or passes so slowly that ye cannot hear his footfall," said Jeanne. "Methought, by the coldness of the air, I heard it last in the first watch of the morning."

"Did the voice touch you—breathe on you—speak to you?" exclaimed the abbot of Fécamp.

"What was it like—what *could* a voice be like in outward presentment? Did some presence enter your chamber—it was a rare hour for fiend or angel to visit a maiden's couch!" said Cauchon, with his terrible sneer.

"A light beamed in at the dungeon-bars—a glorious winged presence was there, and clouds of the purple incense of heaven surrounded it!" replied the Maid.

"And did you thank the voice—did you kneel to it in adoration?" said Cauchon, with affected carelessness.

"I thanked it—who would not—that brought such consolation, precious as water to a dying soldier?—sitting in my bed, for my chains give me no further liberty, with my clasped hands, thus."

"And what did you ask of it?" continued Cauchon, smoothing the jewelled cross on his magnificent stole.

"Aid!—and the voice answered me, bidding me answer ye boldly and fear not. And do I blench?"

"Persecuting fiend! wilt thou never abandon this woman until thou hast destroyed her?" exclaimed Cauchon, and looked the power he objurgated. "What further did it counsel thee, unhappy?"

"I demanded of the voice what I should answer to your subtleties—for indeed ye would ensnare me! And it said, 'Reply boldly, and God will aid thee. The hour of thy deliverance is at hand, when I will set thee face to face with the king of England, and thou shalt prove the vanquisher!"

"More wars, more bloodshed she dreameth, even in her dungeon!" exclaimed Cauchon.

"Beware of that voice, Jeanne; it would enharden you only to your destruction. Believe in a friend!" said the canon Perrinet, who had been anxiously on the look-out for a means to secure Jeanne's good will, without offending the superior powers. But the terrible frown with which Cauchon turned and stared at him, showed that the latter object was not so eaily effected, while the former was a dangerous failure.

"A friend!—Jeanne was never the friend of traitors," she replied. "But for you, lord bishop, look to what you do! For, in very truth, I am the messenger of Him who wields the lightning, and you place yourself in great peril by sitting as my judge."

"We fear none in the discharge of our duty," said Cauchon, wiping his brows, on which the perspiration gushed in large drops. "And does this voice never partake of human inconstancy—never change its opinions? Did the voice, as thou callest the unclean spirit, prohibit thee to answer aught that might be asked of thee?"

"This will I not reply to ye on—nor on aught concerning the king," said Jeanne.

"Doubtless it told thee how Charles of Valois would rush with all his chivalry on Rouen, and tear down its walls with his hands, rather than suffer his noble deliverer to perish?" said Cauchon, mockingly. "Have we not all heard—in ballads—how generous a chivalry France possesses; and will they suffer their leader—and a woman—to perish without a blow?"

"They will not—they will not!" exclaimed the heroic peasant girl, with enthusiasm. "Charles hath it now in his power to repay me all he owes me—not a crown, indeed, for I demand nothing but the blessed light of the sun and the free air to blow my cheeks red as the apples of autumn; which they were once wont to be, ere I dreamed of glory and awoke with ashes in my mouth!"

"The voice, then, commanded thee to continue to conceal the truth from this holy tribunal?" said the bishop.

"If even so, wherein is it my offence!" returned Jeanne.

"Thou confessest that thou art commanded to remain stubborn and resolved and audacious before us?" said Frater Johannes.

"Believe, at least, that man did not tell me so," returned Jeanne.

"And do you truly believe that this voice came from God and by His ordainment?" said the canon Perrinet, very tremulously.

"As truly and firmly as I believe in the Christian faith, and that the Son of Mary redeemed us from the pains of hell!"

Cauchon laughed a dark, satisfied laugh.

"Thou art enow to destroy men's belief in the most holy and canonized miracles!" he exclaimed. "And believe you that this apparition was an angel, or was it a saint—and male or female?"

"The voice came from God—let that satisfy you, for more I know not whether to declare; and I have more fear to offend the angels above by answering, than ye by refusing to answer. And therefore on this question, I pray ye to give me pause."

"Deem you to displease God by speaking the truth?" returned the subtle prelate.

"When He commands us to keep it a secret," said Jeanne d'Arc.

Cauchon's drift was now to raise the inference, that this supposed angelic visit and encouragement was in reality the usual effort of the fiend to keep up the audacity of his victims, until their impenitence and destruction were insured. Even the young notary, who continued to scrawl parchment with his tremulous little hand, let fall the pen with amazement and fear at the potent use he made of the sacrilegious underplot.

Specially cruel was one of the questions on this subject wherewith Cauchon strove to confuse and entangle his victim.

"And deem you that this celestial intelligence that visits you, would obey you so far as to be your messenger to Charles of Valois?

"It hath so promised. It will reveal my great need to the king with words of power to move stones—words that would seem vacant sounds to ye; but, oh, what power have they over hearts that remember! Of this I am well assured and content."

"But wherefore could not the voice speak and direct your king as well in your absence as in your presence?" said Cauchon. "What need of a simple shepherd girl to be its interpreter?"

"My reverend lord, we put not pure waters into foul vessels; and Charles is too special a sinner to receive a heavenly oracle direct," said the canon Perrinet, in a tone so humble that it actually seemed to crawl into hearing.

"And what art thou to pretend to utter one?" said Jeanne, scornfully. "But, in very faith, I am but a weapon in the wielder's hands—a foolish shepherd girl."

Yet, as she spoke, the greatness of her deeds, the unmatched glories of her career, arose before her and appalled even herself, and she concluded with a rapt and sublime look——

"Nothing know I, or have known or done, but by the grace of my God!"

"And did your counsellors tell you, that you should escape from these dungeons?" said the abbot of Fécamp.

"This have you yet to learn, messire," replied Jeanne, with a smile, recalled from her grand reverie by the fat, vacant look of the worthy abbot.

"Did the voice teach you to answer mitred abbots thus contemptuously?" said Cauchon, also smiling. "If so, that it was a rebellious and insolent angel cannot be doubted. But how know you, that the light which streamed in at your dungeon bars was not of the flames of hell?"

"It made even my fetters golden, so pure and beautiful it was," returned Jeanne, earnestly.

"Thus can imagination paint the universe: perchance thus it doth—and all things are but seemings," mused the learned prelate, aloud. "But saw you a form, too; did this airy nothing of thy thought present some outward seeming?"

"I have told ye, I would not answer on all things; I have not leave for it—my oath touches not this. The voice was good, and sweet, and charitable; nor will I farther reply on this."

"Had the voice from whom you were wont to receive counsel, sight and eyes? At least you may tell us that," said the abbot of Fécamp, who had a great curiosity seemingly on the outward appearance of the spirits.

"It is a saying of little children, that sometimes men are hanged for speaking the truth," said Jeanne, almost playfully.

"But not *burned*, my daughter!—for denying the truth, they are," said the inquisitor vicar.

Thomas de Courcelles, a profound doctor and licentiate of theology in the university of Paris, now took up the foiled weapons of his colleagues. "Know ye, Jeanne, whether you are in the grace of God?" he said, with a stern glance.

"If I am not, God put me; and if I am, God keep me in it," replied Jeanne. "I should grieve more than for torture or death, if I knew myself not to be in the grace of God! And were I in so forlorn a state, I do not believe that the angels would visit me, and I would wish that every one understood that as well as I do, ignorant as ye deem me. I was not surely out of the grace of God, when first I heard those holy voices—scarcely thirteen years of age?"

"And did these voices tell thee, at that innocent age, that thou shouldst hate the English?" said Cauchon.

"They bade me hate the enemies of France and of my king!"

"And in that ignorant village and age hadst thou revelations that the English should come into France?" said Cauchon.

"Already they had come; already I had trembled by my father's hearth to hear of their ravages," replied the Maid of Orleans.

"And hadst thou even then the intention of battling with them?" said Cauchon.

"I burned with the desire to restore my king to his own, and often have I wept until the day-star appeared, beside my sleeping sister, to think how the stranger held it from him."

"And also when thou wert lonely in the fields?"

"Ever, ever! The thought did dwell, like fire that would have vent, in my soul!"

"Did it specially haunt thee beneath the fairy tree of Domremy?"

"Ay!—for in its shadow I spent the most part of the day, watching my flocks as they fed silently around me," replied Jeanne; and pleased with the sweet and balmy recollections of those tranquil days she needed no further prompting to speak of the tree and fountain of their associated legends, of the hermit of St. Mary, and, in fact of all the events of her youth. The inquisitors listened with profound attention; above all, to the account of the mysterious hermit and to Jeanne's smiling and incredulous admission that, on the day of her christening, her godmother, dame Jeanne, imagined she saw the "dark ladies" dancing round their fatal tree.

"This seeming candour reveals much," said Cauchon, significantly glancing among his colleagues. "Who might this hermit be? The devil, we know, hath power to assume what form he likes. You are womanly in truth, in your discourse, Jeanne!—will you don woman's weeds, as were more seemly to appear withal in this reverend presence?"

"Let me depart from it and Rouen in them, and I will wear them otherwise not," replied Jeanne.

"Why did you put on man's garb at all, woman?" said the Abbot Ægidius.

Jeanne coloured deeply, and replied in a somewhat abashed tone "For the same reason that I still wear it—that men might take no carnal love of me."

"The devil, indeed, is said to be jealous of his paramours, which may account for thy great scorn of men's love, if it be true thou hast never played him a trick with all thine opportunities, Jeanne," said the canon Perrinet, anxious to remove the effect on his patron of his former indiscreet interposition in favour of the prisoner. A look of scorn was his only reply.

The abbot of Fécamp was now permitted for some time to indulge his curiosity in efforts to extract from Jeanne an exact description of the persons, complexions, colours, dresses, wings, feet, &c. of the apparitions. But Jeanne seemed to disdain to satisfy this puerile sentiment, and so continually foiled the questionings of her tormentor, that he and others as foolish came to the conclusion, it was because she knew that the description must be that of fiends, that she was silent. As if one who desired to deceive, and possessed so rich an imagination, could not as easily have feasted them with portraits endowed with celestial attributes.

"Is it prohibited to thee, Jeanne, to reply on so many important points?" said Cauchon, with a caustic smile.

"I know not whether it be or not; but methinks from your eagerness to learn, it should be," replied Jeanne.

"But again," continued the theologian, "dost thou deem it lawful to assume this dress, prohibited to thy sex by the decrees of scriptures and of councils.

"If He who made all things commands, may we disobey? And where speaks God more clearly than in men's hearts?" returned Jeanne.

"It is the heresy of the poisonous Wicliff!" exclaimed the inquisitor. "The right of private judgment! Unhappy woman! believest thou to have done well in assuming this unhallowed garb, against the ordainment of the Church?"

"All that I have done in obedience to God and my conscience I believe to have done well," replied Jeanne. "And thence do I expect good succour and assurance."

"Was there really an angel on the head of your king, when you saw him first? We heard that you should say so," said the abbot of Fécamp, abruptly filling the pause that followed.

"By blessed Mary! if there was, I saw him not," said Jeanne, with impatience. But the question introduced a long series of tormenting questions relating to her reception at Chinon. The manner in which she became possessed of her sword and arms next came into discussion; and Cauchon's artful elucidations on this subject naturally infused into his credulous auditors a suspicion, that her armour and weapons were of enchanted manufacture. A convincing proof was the fact that, after she had resigned them at St. Denis, she was never fortunate in war.

"Save at Beauvais, messire," said Jeanne; "but 'tis true, I had no need to fight; the gates flew open there of their own accord."

"Treason wrought that miracle, as it did many more of thine," said the dispossessed prelate, secretly exasperated to the highest degree. "But, when battle was really before thee, didst thou never pray that thy sword might be fortunate?"

"It is a priest that asks! What soldier prays not that his harness may be fortunate? and know ye not, that I am a soldier of the king of France?" exclaimed the Maid, haughtily.

"Of the bastard of France, too good a one, I grant ye," said Cauchon.

"Were he here, the royal majesty of his look would strike thee dumb, unpriestly slanderer!" retorted Jeanne, with a vehemence of indignation not as yet kindled by her own wrongs.

The prelate laughed sardonically; but he turned the interrogation to the subject of the Maid's achievements at Orleans, and specially on her standard. The minute description they demanded from her rather surprised Jeanne, but she answered with a warrior's enthusiasm, concluding with a noble disdain. "The soldiers of your party have seen it often! But mayhap they fled so fast, that they had not time to note its colours?"

Fastolfe—for whom, however, this heroic brave was not intended—cringed in his armour like a shellfish, when it feels the heat of the boiling bath into which it is cast.

"Some wondrous magic must there indeed have been to scare into flight men so valiant," interposed the kind prelate. "Which was the charm of your luck, the sword or the banner?"

"Oh, the banner, the banner, a thousand times! Ever I bore it in my hands, when we charged our adversaries, and ever we conquered!"

"How many widows and orphans dost thou deem to have made with the sword?" said Cauchon.

"With mine own hand, none!—none have I ever slain, and for those who fell by the swords of my soldiers, why came they into France to make widows and orphans there?" replied Jeanne, with visible emotion.

Thomas de Courcelles now spoke in his solemn, magisterial tones. "Did you not tell those deluded wretches that followed you, that you would receive and whirl back on the enemy all the arrows, bolts, stones from machines, and cannon-shot, which we might send against them?"

"Nay, sir, not so; many were wounded, many bled by my side. But never saw I French blood shed without the anguish of a mother! I told them only to fear nothing, and led them on fearlessly. I have myself been wounded, grievously wounded."

Finding that he gained little advantage from these queries beyond exciting an involuntary feeling of admiration among the auditory, Cauchon shifted his interrogation to more clerical points. Taking the opportunity of her reply, to a renewed pressing to swear unconditionally that she would tell the truth as readily to him as to the pope himself, on all the matters relating to the process, he inquired who she believed to be the true pope?

The great schism of the fifteenth century had just been concluded by the deposition of two contending pontiffs, and the election of a third in the room of both. It was not to be thought that a country girl, who had spent her whole life in the forests or in a camp, could give a proper reply to this captious question. But the very innocence of Jeanne's ignorance saved her: she replied by inquiring if there were two popes in Christendom?

The bishop was staggered with a question that turned his weapon on himself; but he very skilfully replied by informing her that there were three persons claiming to be supreme pontiffs in Christendom and demanded of her, as one inspired by Heaven, which was the one that ought to be obeyed? Still was he foiled by the traditionary simplicity of her convictions. Christendom ought to obey the pope of Rome, she said,—which happened to be the one recognised by the church of France.

Others of the doctors, who were impatient for opportunities of displaying their zeal or clerical acumen, now began to question her, on various points, and with such rapidity and confusion, that Jeanne put her hand to her brows as if stunned. The abbot of Fécamp also returned to the charge with what he thought a masterly query.

"Did the saints speak to you in English or in French, or Lorraine gibberish?" inquired this sage.

"Wherefore should they speak English to me, being on the side of France?" replied Jeanne, contemptuously.

The clerical tumult still continued for a time until the inquisitor whose dull malign eyes had been fixed for a long time on Jeanne's person, suddenly exclaimed—

"You wear a ring! Often in the thick of combat I have heard that you gaze on it, and become strong as if refreshed with wine."

"Yea, it hath spells in it—mighty spells!" said Jeanne, gazing a

her ring with a mixture of sorrow and tenderness. "It was given to me by the king the day after his coronation in Rheims, with a pledge that—a pledge which he will redeem!"

Cauchon immediately commanded the ring to be taken from her finger, and handed to him.

"It may be a talisman to give her courage and audacity," he said.

"Do not thou at least profane it with thy touch," said Jeanne in agony, as the treasured relic was torn from her finger. "I give it to the church of Rouen, and on your head be the burden of defrauding it!"

Cauchon renewed with increased malignity the prosecution of his main object, which was to substantiate the belief that Jeanne had made a compact with the witches of the fairy tree, and had received her mission from them. She frankly avowed that the spirits she had seen in her childhood had always appeared at the haunted fountain; and well they might if, as is probable, her visions visited her when, in ecstatic devotion, she fell asleep to the murmur of its waters.

"It is not to be doubted that the fallen ones retain some portion of their divine beauty, troubled and shadowed though it be," said Cauchon, after listening to the exquisitely lovely description she gave of the first impersonations her imagination had visually presented. "But the tree is known by its fruit. What promises did these spirits make to thee? It needs large ones to tempt spirits like thine."

"They made me none without the permission of God," said Jeanne.

"But what?" persisted Cauchon.

"This is no part of your trial. Rest only assured that my king shall be restored to his kingdom, will it or not the adversary! They promised to conduct me into paradise, which would they had done ere I saw the damp darkness of your dungeon walls!"

"Have you no other promises?" said Frater Johannes.

"Yea, but nothing that relates to your trial, and therefore I will not tell ye what they are. Within three months it shall be known."

"Jeanne," said Cauchon with his terrible smile, "do your voices tell you that within three months you shall be liberated from your prison?"

"I am not on my trial for that. Yet I know not when, nor how, I shall be liberated," said Jeanne, with a sigh. "But those who wish to push me out of the world, may perchance go before me!"

"Is there any likelihood of that, Jeanne?" said the canon Perrinet, with great eagerness.

"Ay, if thy cowardice matched not thy villany!" mused Cauchon. "But tell us, my daughter, did your voices tell you that you should be delivered from your present captivity?"

"Ask me this question in three months, and I will answer you!" replied Jeanne.

"Nay, we will not then trouble your rest—if rest it may be," said Cauchon.

"I need some now—much, very much!" replied the prisoner; but although it was plain to all present that she was much exhausted and could scarcely reply, the inquisitors in no way abated their merciless

zeal. Power even to understand the questions asked her seemed at length to fail her, and she replied frequently that she forgot—and truly—until the judicious Abbot Ægidius chanced to touch a string that played.

"Have you not a mandragora?" he inquired with earnest folly.

"I have no mandragora, nor ever had!" replied Jeanne, with vehemence.

"Does none grow in your country, and it such a place for witches?" returned the abbot.

"I have heard it said that it grows beneath the charmed tree," said Jeanne, thoughtfully. "My father used to warn me against it, though small his need, and he said it was a perilous root, and a wicked to gather; but wherefore, or what evil it had, I know not."

"Her very father?" said Frater Johannes, turning np his hard eyes with a species of mechanical difficulty.

"Ay, and we shall possibly have him here anon, as a witness against her, brother," replied Cauchon.

"Ha, bishop!—bishop as thou art—thou liest! My father appear against his own blood, his flesh, his child! Cruel old men, ye lie!—but ye were never fathers," burst from the heart of Jeanne d'Arc.

"Wert thou e'er a mother, Maid, to school us in parental sentiments?" said the prelate, continuing with unaltered calmness—"in what place was this mandragora to be found?"

"I have heard that it grew among the rocks above the fountain of which ye speak, under the gnarled roots of some fig-trees," replied Jeanne.

"Thou hast a special knowledge of its localities, never to have sought it!" said Cauchon. "Knowest thou not then, too, for what purposes it is used by wizards and sorceresses?"

"I have heard that it brought wealth to the finder, or what men call wealth—gold! but I believe it not," replied Jeanne.

"Did your voices ever tell you so?" said the inquisitor vicar.

"Never! Wealth and gold were never aught to me: I had no need of them," replied Jeanne.

"How could your king then reward you for the mighty deeds done in his behalf? How hath he rewarded you?" said Cauchon, with a look that added poison to the keen edge of his words.

"I had arms and a charger; what doth a soldier need more?" she replied, after a brief pause, in a low and melancholy tone.

"In what figure did St. Michael appear to you? Had he any clothes on?" persisted the abbot Ægidius.

"Deem you God hath not wherewithal to clothe his saints?" retorted Jeanne, with a degree of fierceness.

Some of the judges, hitherto silent in the presence of so renowned a theologian as the bishop of Beauvais, now ventured to cross-question her on this important point whilst he remained in a mood of profound abstraction. He broke suddenly into their chase, "Tell me, Jeanne! dost thou deem thou art in mortal sin or not?" he exclaimed, fixing his piercing eyes upon her. "Remember how many kinds are mortal! Magic and heresy are deadly: but so 'tis to love

the husband of another! So 'tis to cherish any passion which, if gratified, were a mortal sin!"

"I know not whether I am in mortal sin, God forbid!" said Jeanne, in a dizzy and shaken voice; "if so, I am indeed all lost, for what on earth but deserts me or is my foe?"

"What sign did you give your king whereby he was led to believe that a country wench should restore to him his crown?" continued the bishop of Beauvais. "We have heard that it was the crown of Charlemagne; and what but magic could have brought it from the treasury of Rheims?"

"It was not there, my lord, but in the hands of the Jews at Frankfort; I heard my lord Sir John say so," interposed Sir Wulfstan, with a scrape and hesitation of speech not altogether chivalric.

"The miracle is the greater!" replied Cauchon, with a short laugh. "But let us hear her own account."

"Nothing concerning it shall you draw from my lips with red hot pincers! Go and ask himself! I cannot tell ye without perjury."

"And where did you acquire your deep science in the art of war?" said Thomas de Courcelles. "*Ars longa*, we all know, and your time has been as yet but *brevis*."

"On the field of battle! yet I know not well what you say," replied Jeanne, with some anxiety.

"Did you not tell them to bear their banners boldly forward, and that they should have good fortune?" said Cauchon.

"I told them what happened, and what will happen yet!" replied Jeanne, impatiently.

The attention of the inquisitors was now directed by a few artful words from Cauchon, to discover whether Jeanne had done anything with her standard that could be construed into magic ceremonies, veiled under questions as to whether she had sprinkled it with holy water, or pronounced blessings over it? Jeanne was aware that the pious Marie d'Anjou had caused the one she embroidered for her to be solemnly consecrated, but she foiled her questioners by declaring that nothing of the sort had been done by her command. Still a long series of accusations regarding her standard were deduced from the most trifling circumstances; for instance, the flock of white butterflies that fluttered around it at Troyes.

More matter of suspicion seemed to grow upon her in proportion as she advanced dispelling that opposed to her. Cauchon accused her of having made herself an object of idolatry with the people, which truly their love for her had once approached. The rude pictures and medals made of her, the images set up in churches, the vast throngs that had followed her, the mothers that had brought their children to her to bless, were proofs indeed of the superstition of which she had been the object, but could not be imputed to her as offences.

"If some of my party have offered up prayers, masses, in my honour, it was not by my command," she said, and a gleam of patriotic tenderness lighted the melancholy expression of her countenance. "But if they prayed for me, or pray, methinks they have not done ill, nor do!"

"Tell me, Jeanne, and remember your oath!" exclaimed Cauchon, in a thundering tone, provoked by many recollections; "do those of your party believe in verity that you are sent from God?"

A moment's shadow of an appalling doubt which had already by snatches darkened her whole soul, passed over Jeanne's at this question, that seemed fraught with some secret knowledge to the contrary. But she rallied in that brief space. "I know not what they believe; to their own hearts I leave it," she said: "but if they believe it not, nevertheless I am sent by God!"

"The multitude themselves misbelieve so no longer!" returned Cauchon. "Their idol is broken: it has fallen from its high pedestal: and the gods of the mob must be set on lofty altars, far out of their handling!"

Jeanne was greatly moved at these words, remembering Orleans; but she made no reply. No word of accusation escaped her lips against the people she had served, and whose ingratitude she had reaped, in almost equal abundance.

"She is marvellously obstinate, and our task grows too wearisome!" said Cauchon, at length, almost equally perplexed and exasperated. "We will adjourn, and meanwhile we will consult to see what may be gathered from the confessions and admissions of this woman. If there is any point on which it may be necessary to interrogate her more at length, we will appoint certain deputies to hear her answers, and reduce them to writing. I desire you all, messires, to attend me in my——in the palace of the archbishopric to-morrow, to deliberate and give your opinions. And, meanwhile, I strictly command that no one whomsoever shall presume to leave the city without my permission."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE JUDGMENT.

"Damsel of France, I think, I have you fast:
Unchain your spirits now with spelling charms,
And try if they can gain your liberty."—*Henry VI.*

After this fashion, and with a slowness that mocked the revengeful thirst of her enemies for her blood, Jeanne's trial proceeded. Under the pretext that it was unnecessary to trouble the whole body of the judges in the incessant and minute examinations which he continued, Cauchon selected certain persons whose superstition or malice he knew to be favourable to his purposes, and caused them to be appointed deputies of the tribunal. Henceforth Jeanne was examined in her dungeon, and her answers were given with such glosses and turns as suited the pleasure of the examinants.

But vain were all the artifices and subtleties of the experienced sophists and schoolmen who laboured incessantly to involve her in the meshes of some fatal admission. The simplicity and humility of

her spirit in matters of religion, her very ignorance of all dogmatic theology, kept her safe from the snares extended to entrap her into the charges of heresy. Those of magic rested only on the wonders of her career, the legends of her childhood, and the statements of Fastolfe. Nothing in any of her replies tended to confirm the monstrous accusation.

The bishop of Beauvais began to find that he had undertaken a task of greater difficulty than he had at first apprehended. He found it even to his disadvantage that he caused St. Margaret to order the Maid to confess on all points, without reserve, on which he chose to question her. His belief in the conspiracy of the archbishop Regnault and his party at the court was strengthened by almost all he learned; but Jeanne herself was so evidently not in the plot that it was impossible to deduce any matter of accusation against her on that score.

Meanwhile the heroic candour and eloquence of her replies, coupled with the renown of her marvellous deeds, shook the prepossessions of some of the divines on whose assistance he had most relied, and even made some timid and wavering converts. Among these was the abbot of Fécamp, who, ravished with the beauty of Jeanne's descriptions of the celestial hierarchy, and of the heaven they inhabited, began to incline irresistibly to the belief that she had actually seen and conversed with them as she declared. The canon Perrinet was the only personage whose zeal in the cause grew warmer. His genius of atheism and malevolence opposed to generosity and enthusiasm, and vented in sneers, was of considerable service in shaking the pillars of that sublime credulity which so far kept Jeanne elevated above all the malice of her enemies, like one seated on a rock who beholds the sea churn vainly at his feet below.

On the other hand, the anger and impatience of the English chiefs increased with every hour of delay. The panic fears of their soldiery were heightened instead of being diminished by the imprisonment and expected punishment of the sorceress. Her undaunted demeanour persuaded them that she had still supernatural artifices in store, by whose aid she would not only escape but complete the ruin of the English cause in France. The most dreadful surmises and reports were circulated, partly the invention of fear and partly of policy, but conducing to the same end of exciting the terror and fury of the soldiery to a species of frenzy. They insulted and maltreated the judges for their delays, and their commanders took no pains to check their insolence or protect the court in the discharge of its lingering functions. The English nobles and knights were equally anxious to prove to the world, by an authentic and ever memorable act of the Church, that they had not been vanquished by a woman, but by the preternatural powers of a sorceress.

Fear is a cruel passion, more cruel even than hate; and every sentiment of compassion which the youth, the sex, the courage, the glory, the misfortunes of Jeanne d'Arc, might otherwise have moved, was lost in the ravening impatience and bloodthirst provoked by this mysterious and infinite form in which it assailed the minds of the

English. Alarm for his own personal safety was now added to the powerful motives of interest and revenge that actuated the fugitive bishop of Beauvais. Marvellous to relate, even the feelings of remorse and hesitation which harassed every step of progress in his work of merciless injustice, induced him to hurry it on. Like the more brutal but less criminal murderers who slay with their hands, Cauchon, having struck the first blow, felt as if he could only rest when he had completed the destruction of his victim. Moreover, he was only the foremost piece of a vast machine put in motion with an impetus that must crush and overthrow any portion that halted on the downward rush.

He applied himself indefatigably to his task, however slowly he seemed to the impatient English to advance. Some sharp discussions arose between him and the council on the subject, especially with the haughty Cardinal Beaufort. The two churchmen resembled each other so much in the pride and despotism of their character that they were at no time likely to agree; but on questions which involved learning of a kind possessed by Cauchon in perfection, and utterly disdained by the warlike cardinal, they were certain to be frequently at desperate odds. Cauchon soon felt that he had a powerful and domineering enemy to contend with, whose influence could only be counteracted by the magnitude of his own services; and he applied all the resources of his scholastic sophistry, learning, and ingenuity to destroy the effect produced by the candour and innocence of Jeanne's replies. Her noble and beaming countenance was a perpetual evidence in her favour which he wisely got rid of as much as possible, by conducting her cross-examination, with a few chosen accomplices, in private. He set numerous engines at work to bias or overawe the minds of the judges. By terror, authority, bribes, and promises, he gradually subdued the majority into at least acquiescence in his conclusions. The glosses and interpretations his artful genius suggested, the weight of learning with which he crushed and overwhelmed the simplicity of Jeanne's truth, were not indeed easily to be withstood. He procured evidence of a very startling nature also, it must be confessed, from Jeanne's native village, which more than corroborated Fastolfe's fatal legend of the scene at the fairy tree. The superstitious knight himself, distracted by contrary emotions of revenge, pity, admiration, and horror, found his bosom a chaotic hell of feelings whose torturing tumult he could only ascribe to the continuance of his possession by the fiend. To complete his work Cauchon sent to demand the opinion of the University of Paris, on the articles of accusation and defence of Jeanne d'Arc, well knowing that the exasperation of that factious city against the Maid, and his own influence with the university, would procure him such an answer as he desired.

But while awaiting the result of the grave formula of deliberation which it pleased the university to go through on the occasion,—a circumstance occurred which seemed likely to deprive all parties of their expected victim. Jeanne d'Arc fell ill of a violent fever, which, for a time, threatened to redeem her from the power of her enemies.

n spite of the heroic confidence inspired by her natural courage, her nocence, and the fallacious promises of the angels that visited her in er dungeon, the anguish of hope deferred and of her recollections, he incessant torture and anxiety of mind produced by her examina- ions, the baleful air of a dungeon and want of exercise, finally worked er pure blood into a wild ferment.

Her life was in danger for several days, but the strength of her onstitution and the skill of her physicians baffled the fury of the isease, and the exhaustion it caused perhaps preserved even her owerful intellect from yielding to the violent strain upon it, by relax- ng its hold. The light and airy fiend of delirium took the place of the rim and stationary madness that had hoped to make her its prey. Nor could the zeal of the tenderest affection have watched over her nore faithfully and anxiously than the hatred of her jailers. This assion at least was the one which induced the Regent Bedford and he English council to send the best physicians at hand to her aid; nd Fastolfe and Wulfstan of Warbois might imagine it was the same itter sentiment that kept them chained to her couch, vigilant vatchers and attendants. We may perhaps doubt whether it was ltogether so stern a feeling that brought tears to the unwont eyes of he verdurer, as he sat and listened to the mournful babblings which etrayed how her mind wandered amidst scenes of past glory and appiness, or the tranquil associations of her childhood. Nor was Fastolfe altogether right in ascribing to revengeful ire the suspicions nd wrath enkindled in his soul by the passionate lovingness of the upplications or joyful greetings she addressed to some phantom of he young king, which oftener than any other haunted the peopled ision of her diseased fancy.

But at length Jeanne recovered sufficiently, in the estimation of her enemies, to make her fit for their vengeance, and a court was sum- moned to pronounce judgment in her cause. It was held, as on the first sessions, in the chapel of the Castle of Rouen, and was supposed to be a public audience, inasmuch as it was crowded with the princi- pal English nobility in the city, including the Regent, Cardinal Beau- fort, and all the knights of the garter then in France.

Cauchon administered the supporting advice of his false angel to Jeanne's spirit, as the physicians did their cordial distillations to her body, whenever its powers seemed to flag and need re-animation. The most positive promises of succour in the hour of need had just been afforded her; and neither the grim array of those warriors whom she had made ashamed to wear the proudest badge of their chivalry, nor the cold wrath in the countenance of Bedford, nor the flaming indignation in that of the cardinal, which made his brows the colour of his robes, seemed in any way to daunt her. Weak and pale as she was with her malady, her eyes shone with courage and defiance, and her step was as firm, when she approached the tribunal, as in her warrior days it had been against fiercer but less deadly foes. It even seemed that her eye ranged among the banderols, placed behind the chairs of the English knights, with exasperating brightness of recol- lection, recalling the overthrows she had given them. A mutter of

wrath passed over those stern lips, and an impatient movement wa plainly audible, in the clatter of armour. Talbot himself finall extinguished a lingering sentiment of admiration and pity in hi heart.

But it was to be remarked on this occasion, that the judges no longe strove with one another in the prominence of place, and a genera shrinking from the black responsibility they shared might almost hav been detected in the receded aspect of the mass on the platform The bishop of Beauvais alone preserved his throne in its former place and thus seemed isolated and in advance of the main body,—a ba eminence which he had amply earned. The inquisitor vicar himsel cold and steeled by nature and custom against the weaker sentiment of humanity, had yet craved permission to absent himself from thi consummation, and was only present in compliance with the mingle threats and entreaties of the bishop.

"Jeanne! you seem, indeed, still to wear the wan colours c disease," said Cauchon, in a mild and almost parental tone. "Le us hope that what has weakened your mortal and fleshy part hat also diminished the rebellious fury and insolence of the fiend whic had gained entire possession of you."

"I am what I was, my lord; my soul is not the slave, but th companion on a journey to my body," replied Jeanne. "But bewar in turn what you do, for you put yourself in great danger!"

"In what danger, Jeanne? Tell us; the forewarned are fore armed," replied the prelate, in his more habitual tone of mockery.

"You say you are my judge," said Jeanne. "I know not if yo are; but look to it well that you do not judge ill, for you will pu yourself thereby in great peril; and I warn you of it, that, if ou Lord punishes you, I may have done my duty in giving you warnin in time."

"We thank thee, Jeanne," replied the bishop.

"How softly you speak!" said Jeanne, with an evanescent faint ness of terror. "Speak in your old tone, my lord of Beauvais; love not to hear the wolf bleat."

"Doubt it not," returned Cauchon, resuming all the overbearin state and fierceness of his manner. "If I could speak in thunder methinks it would be all too weak to appal that fiend-propped hear of thine! Yet let me not forget mine office, which is, charitably an kindly to admonish thee, for the last time, to repent and acknowledg thine errors, and throw thyself on the mercy of the church,—whic will else be obliged to abandon thee to the relentless hand of secula justice! I need not remind thee, for thine audacity has forgotte nothing, in how many and divers times and places, I, and these wis and holy men, my colleagues, have interrogated thee upon matters o faith of great and arduous importance. Whereto thou hast replie various and many things, which lettered and scientific men, diligently considering, have noted much by thee said and confessed heretical an pernicious in the faith; and because thou art an illiterate woman ignorant of the scriptures, we offered to send thee learned an scientific doctors, benevolent and honest men, to inform thee suitably

nd every day, since this process began, we have sent to thee certain f our number to catechise and teach thee on all points necessary to alvation, for the Church closes not her bosom to the returning rodigal. Finally, we address to thee this present salutary admoni- ion, which we entreat thee to consider well and accept submissively. 'or, if thou dost not acknowledge thine offences in a solemn form of ecantation, and throw thyself on the mercy of God, we abandon thee o the justice of men, by fire, and the eternal wrath of Him who gave is power on earth to bind and to loose!"

"I thank ye all, fair sirs, for your care of my soul! Ye would have me confess myself a sorceress and a heretic, and blacken ny king and cause for ever!" replied Jeanne. "It cannot be! But n very truth, seeing how sick at heart I am, it seems to me that I am n great peril of death—not from your hands; the power is not given o them, though the will be, as in the fangless adder's jaws. But, if God loth his pleasure on me, I pray ye let me have shriving, and receive ny Saviour, and be buried in holy earth!"

"If thou wishest to obtain the sacraments of the Church, it behoves thee in the first instance to submit to it wholly;" replied Cauchon. "The only sacrament we can now administer is that of penance."

"Then I know not what to say—do what ye must and may," replied the exhausted but unconquered girl.

"Dost thou refuse to submit thyself, and thy sayings to the authority of the Church?" said Thomas de Courcelles, in hope to obtain some satisfaction to his conscience.

"I submit myself to my God who sent me, and all the blessed saints, male and female, of paradise," returned Jeanne.

"But, child," said De Courcelles, coaxingly, "you must know that there are two Churches; the Church triumphant, where God reigns, and the saints, the angels, and souls that have found salvation, rejoice in bliss; and the Church militant, consisting of our holy father, the pope, God's vicar on earth, the cardinals, the prelates of the Church and clergy, and all good Christian Catholics; which Church being assembled cannot err, and is governed by the Holy Ghost. Now tell me, good child, art thou not willing to submit in all things to the judgment of the Church militant, thus explained?"

"No; for I was sent to France by God, by the Virgin Mary, by the blessed Saints in paradise, by the victorious Church in Heaven!—and to that Church only do I submit myself, and my good deeds, done and to be done," replied the Maid.

"Rank heresy! my last scruple vanishes," said Thomas de Courcelles.

"Read the articles of your libel, reverend promoter," said the bishop, impatiently.

The promoter immediately opened, though with tremulous hands, a long roll of parchment containing the substance of the accusations against Jeanne d'Arc and her replies, compiled by the elaborate skill of Cauchon himself into a frightful and apparently overwhelming mass of accusation.

Having read this document at full length, amidst the thrills horror and indignation of the audience, the promoter demanded th Jeanne d'Arc, commonly called the Maid of Orleans, should declared a sorceress or witch, a fortune-teller, diviner, and fal prophetess, an invoker and conjuratrix of evil spirits, a wom devoted to and persevering in superstition and magic arts, ignora and schismatic in the holy catholic faith, sacrilegious, idolatre an apostate from the faith, accursed as a witch, blasphemous again God and his saints, of scandalous life, seditious, a perturber of pea and hinderer thereof, a woman exciting men to war, cruelly athi for human blood, and stirring to its effusion, one who had shameless abandoned the decency and propriety of her sex, assuming t obscene habit and condition of a soldier and of a man; a pervert of ecclesiastical discipline and of all laws human and divine, in the and other matters alike abominable to God and man; a seductress princes and people, permitting herself, in disdain and contempt God, to be venerated and adored, giving her hands and garments be kissed, and usurping divine honours and worship; a heretic a vehemently suspected of heresy. And, therefore, according divine and canonical laws, she ought to be lawfully and canonical adjudged guilty, and suffer the punishment due to the monstro crimes and heretic pravity proven in her. And this the promot prayed and demanded, in the name of God and of the Cathol Church.

There was a short pause, broken by the voice of the bishop Beauvais, which had acquired a singular croaking hoarseness.

"Hast thou aught to urge against the matter contained in th libel, Jeanne?" he said.

"I appeal to God, the king of heaven and earth!" she replied.

"You should appeal, on the contrary, to the pope and a gener council!—The Council of Bâle is now sitting!" exclaimed the canc Perrinet, unable, in spite of his fears, to hinder himself from makin one last effort to prevent the triumph of his hated patron.

"Remove this fellow who dares to trouble our proceedings!- What, a canon, a doctor of the Church!" said the bishop, veh mently. "We are ashamed to call thee brother; yet, brother, reti instantly to our palace, and dare not to set foot out of its bound until we give permission, on pain of losing your sacred privileges as churchman, and we all know what the faithful subjects of our lor King Henry, will then do by one aiding and comforting this sorceress!

Perrinet, thoroughly recovered from his fit of daring, slunk out o the assembly.

"Trouble not that one among so many should have seemed m friend!—He but seemed," said Jeanne. "Nor will I for an instan withdraw my trust in God, to place it in men."

"Jeanne, very dear daughter! it has now become my most painfu duty to be the first to give my judgment and the reasons for it," said the bishop, with great softness of tone. "But ere I, Peter, b the divine pity, but altogether unworthy, bishop and count of Beau vais, deliver the opinion, which, with great toil and travail of soul

even as a mother painfully brings forth a child of sorrow, we have formed, it behoves us, of the respect due to her great learning and most eminent christianity, to read the judgments transmitted to us of our venerable nurse and fosterer, the University of Paris."

With this pompous preamble, Couchon produced a large parchment, sealed with the seal of the university, and properly authenticated in all its parts; which he opened, and read aloud. It contained a condemnation in the most solemn forms, of all the sayings and acts of Jeanne d'Arc, from her earliest infancy to the last word she had uttered in her defence, as full of heresy, magic, sorcery, murder, treason, rebellion, idolatry, and almost every species of crime that humanity could commit. Jeanne remembered her assault on Paris, and under whose influence these formidable fulminations were launched, and listened with a tranquil expression of disdain. But it was not so with her judges, most of whom had been educated in the university and shared the reverence general in Europe for its decrees, or had much to hope or fear from its power.

Pleased with the effect produced by this document, Cauchon closed it with a reverential kiss, and commenced his proper harangue to the prisoner.

It cannot be denied that the bishop of Beauvais's discourse on this occasion was a perfect model of inquisitorial art. He commenced from the earliest years of Jeanne d'Arc; and having established, with great care, as facts, the traditionary legends relating to the fairy tree and fountain of Domremy, he proceeded to ascribe the marvels of Jeanne's career to a direful compact between her and the enemy of man. The implicit credence in the possibility and even frequency of those diabolical bargains rendered this part of his task easy, and the learning of Cauchon supplied him with infinite examples from writers, sacred and profane, whose testimony it was thought nothing short of heresy even to doubt. From remote ages, fountains and wells had always been regarded, especially by nations of Celtic descent, as the proper haunts of evil spirits. Trees also shared this superstitious dignity, and in Jeanne's case figured both a tree and a fountain.

He delineated the solitary childhood and singular manners of Jeanne d'Arc with an exact minuteness that surprised herself, and recalled so many affecting ideas to her mind that her head involuntarily sunk on her bosom, and the unutterable sadness that shadowed her visage seemed, in vulgar eyes, to attest the truth of the accusing judge's inferences. He changed into a dance of magic ceremonial the innocent amusement she had shared with the rest of the villagers, on the feast of the beech-tree, when they gathered the May, and threw cakes, according to an immemorial custom, into the waters of the fountain. He came then to speak of her early visions beneath the enchanted boughs, and, without hesitation, declared that the supposed saints and angels were neither more nor less than fiends in disguise, who thus introduced themselves and their baleful doctrines without exciting the terror of the young pupil of hell. Cauchon proved this dread identity by many arguments, more or less unfounded, but all subtle, full of venom, and elaborately mingled with

the popular superstition and learned fancies of the age, which h himself at other times made the unceasing subjects of his raillery.

The tree is known by its fruit; and, therefore, the evil that Jeann d'Arc had done was sufficient proof of the malignant nature of th spirits who had sent her forth on her deeds of arms. It was no difficult to persuade men who had suffered so bitterly from the con sequences of her actions, that they were evil in themselves. Th majority of the English had a firm belief that their kings were th rightful sovereigns of France also. They knew that Charles VII. wa weak, voluptuous, faithless, many doubted even his legitimacy: wh should God aid him against the harmless and pious child who claime both crowns by right of inheritance and of his father's sword, almos equally?

The bishop of Beauvais was an orator, and he proved it by th terrible description which he gave of the consequences of Jeanne' mission—the bloodshed, starvation, ruin, and destruction brought o cities and once populous provinces by her means. At the moment c her appearance, he declared that France was about to sink into peac and repose, about to become the most flourishing of nations, unde the care of the wise and valiant brother of Henry V. But now wha was it? A Golgotha, an Aceldama, a field of blood! hopelessl entangled in broils and everlasting warfare.

But despite this flattering allusion, the Regent Bedford turne pale with anger, when the prisoner suddenly interrupted her judg by inquiring whether the good town of Compiègne still held ou against the rebels of Burgundy? "When the fever raged wors methought I was in the market-place, among the children that wep around me on the day of my sally, and heard proclamation made by skeleton in a tabard of England, that all of them should be slai more mercilessly than of old were those of Jewry by Herod that sle the innocents!" she exclaimed.

Without deigning to notice this interruption, the prelate proceede to trace Jeanne through the various phases of her brief but wonderfu career. He showed how the fiend busied himself in removing all th difficulties that beset her way; how she had been timely warned c the intentions at Commercy to arrest her: how she had won an ol and by no means credulous governor of a city to believe in her the seemingly impossible promises, and furnish her with arms an attendants. He proved, with great ability, that she and they mus have passed invisibly from Vaucouleurs to Chinon, inasmuch as th whole country, roads, castles, and villages, were occupied and bese by English and Burgundians.

But now Cauchon arrested his own progress to dilate on a subjec calculated to give Jeanne greater pain than any he had yet inflicted By an elaborate train of authorities, decrees of councils, and texts o Scripture, he proved that it was a highly indecent and sinful procedur in Jeanne d'Arc to assume the garb of the virile sex, much more th arms of a soldier and knight. She could not, therefore, have done i by command of God or his saints, and, therefore, the devil must hav prompted her, since all human acts were inspired either by th

powers of evil or good. The impure and relentless heart and learning of Cauchon suggested a horrible hypothesis to destroy the impression of the reason alleged by Jeanne herself for this part of her conduct. He declared that, as was usually his course with his female victims, Satan had constituted her one of his paramours. It was well known that the Foul One was as jealous as he was lustful, and he might, perhaps, have taken some special liking to the young country wench before them, his victims for the most part being aged and hideous women. This might be the real reason for the pretended chastity and decorum of Jeanne's manners, if, indeed, it was possible she had preserved either in the court and camps of Charles VII. The worthy ecclesiastic proceeded to give a picture of the manners of both, which proved that at least he was familiar with handling the dark colours of history, and with the most degrading and dreadful features of his times.

The Maid of Orleans was herself not unaware that much of what was said was true. Her efforts to correct the licentiousness of the camps of Charles VII., his own and that of his courtiers, recurred to her in overwhelming testimony. But she was so stunned and horror-struck with the detestable gloss cast on herself, that, in spite of her recollections, the bishop seemed to deal during the rest of his discourse in monstrous and unfounded fictions. It almost seemed to her as if he spoke henceforth of some one else that dreamily usurped her name, some fiend of bloodshed, cruelty, impurity, and all malignity!

But it was necessary to pursue the chain of the main accusation of magic and sorcery, secured at intervals by these stancheons of calumny. Jeanne next beheld herself at Chinon, in the presence of her king, raising a simulated regalia by the exercise of magic arts, to lure him into credence and acceptance of her diabolical aid! The whole scene Cauchon declared to be either a presumptuous and lying invention, or a contrivance of the fiend to allure the despairing Charles and his courtiers into the snare. Her glorious exploits at Orleans were in the same manner declared to be performed by magic, which had enabled her to paralyze the arms of the English soldiery, delude their eyes with appalling apparitions, quench the fire in their culverins, stop the ball in its flight, and drive the bolts and arrows whirling back in the faces of the archers who discharged them! It was carefully remembered that she had changed the course of the wind at her pleasure, and of the stream of the Loire, the most unmanageable and headstrong of rivers.

Cauchon came at length to speak of the campaign of Pataye; and something of malicious satisfaction might have been detected by a skilled psychologist in the tone of his lamentations over its disasters. Suffolk shuddered and wept at the remembrance of his defeat, and of his brother's death at Jargeau; and Fastolfe became rigid as a statue, if statues could breathe hard and pantingly between their teeth, when his quondam friend and ally spoke of his flight from the field of Pataye. Cauchon indeed adopted his own account of the matter, ascribed the disgraceful panic to the irresistible force of fiends

disguised as the knight's esquires, who hurried his horse from the field, as if driven on a whirlwind; but he took care to make this account probable by so powerful and eloquent a contrast of the former valiant career of the knight, that his heart was evidently wrung, and he ground his teeth with fury. If other proofs were needed, there were the circumstances relating to the stag of Commercy, and the chain fastened round its antlers! From the moment Fastolfe regained this precious gift, so foolishly bestowed on the four-footed attendant of the sorceress, it seemed he began to regain his manly courage and knightly audacity.

But when Cauchon came to speak of the march to Rheims, and coronation of Charles VII., Jeanne's memory became so thronged with painful and delicious recollections, that she scarcely heard or attended to the formidable glosses put upon the expedition and its events. It seemed to her, in the delusive tenderness of the associations thus provoked, that she was once more free, and pacing with a gallant host, beneath a fair sky, on her noble charger, discoursing of heaven and glory and love with the young sovereign, now, as then, the idol of her generous dreams. She awoke from those enchanting reveries with a start,—and found herself with Cauchon beneath the walls of Paris.

It may be imagined that the politic prelate did not lose so fine an opportunity to compliment those many personages of his audience whom the former part of his discourse was certain to shame and wound. He announced as a happy omen, and a proof of the divine protection vouchsafed to the piety and virtues of John of Lancaster, that the fortunes of the Maid had received their first rude shock in encountering with him. He lauded the valour and fidelity of the Parisians, the unmoved constancy of the English leaders and their soldiers, not to be shaken by former disasters, and present prodigies. Another proof of her witchcraft was here noted. A man-at-arms, Wulfstan of Warboi by name, formerly possessed by terror at her mere mention, luckily drawing blood from her by piercing her with an arrow, was ever after so completely cured, that he became one of her capturers, and was now her jailer. The ex-verdurer seemed scarcely to rejoice in this revelation of his exploits, for he hung his head, and looked like one ashamed of what he had done.

Jeanne was slightly but evidently troubled on learning who had inflicted upon her the dreadful wound at Paris, and had checked for ever her career of triumph. But other crimes were yet to be enumerated, and claimed her attention. She learned that, in the person of Franquet d'Arras, she had inhumanly, and against every law of war and chivalry, put to death a noble Burgundian gentleman, who had not otherwise offended than by his devotion to the service of his king and his lord, the bishop of Beauvais. By this proceeding she had deprived herself of all right of complaint, if even the count de Ligny had not thought proper to surrender her to the Church, but had done retaliatory justice in depriving her of life.

The cruel ecclesiastic had carefully noted her own frequent declaration, that her powers had only been granted her for a year. His exasperation of revenge was deepened on approaching the period of

his own great losses and defeats. He explained the circumstance of Jeanne having fallen into the hands of her enemies on the very day after the expiration of her year of compact with the fiend, as one of the usual tricks of that deceitful tempter.

A thousand circumstances, too minute, and many of them too indecent, to be recorded in this brief summary, completed the amazing array of false proof which the sublety, learning, and cruelty of Cauchon had concentrated. Among other signs of the displeasure of Heaven, it was known to all that Jeanne's great misfortunes had always taken place on some special fast-day of the Church. She herself confessed, and to give the worst their due, with evident contrition and anguish, that after the coronation at Rheims, she had continued with the army, in spite of an express prohibition from our Lady. She admitted a doubt as to whether she was in mortal sin or not, and refused to declare on what account. She avowed that she attacked Paris wilfully on a solemn festival of the Church, as if her object was to please her own masters, by insulting the celestial chiefs of Christianity.

For these and many more reasons, the bishop of Beauvais solemnly declared that, with great sorrow and reluctance, he joined in all the judgments of the university of Paris, considered that the promoter had fully established his charges, and pronounced that the accused was guilty of the crimes of heresy, idolatry, worship of fiends, magic, sorcery, indecency, murder, sedition, robbery, and rebellion.

"And now, my brethren," concluded the bishop, "it is your turn, each singly, individually, and for himself, to deliver his judgment and the reasons for it. But first—that no one may retain even the shadow of a doubt—two witnesses shall be called whose testimony will establish the firm bases of this accusation. Call John Fastolfe, formerly knight and of the most illustrious and noble order of the garter."

"And one who shall be knight and brother again, when this accursed witch is ashes!" said the Regent, in a loud voice.

"It is not the wont of the holy office to examine witnesses in presence of the accused, brother of Beauvais," said the inquisitor-vicar, but certainly with no intention against the prisoner.

"But this is for a special purpose, my brother," replied the bishop; and Fastolfe advanced, very pale, and quivering in every muscle.

Before he began to speak—and he seemed to have some difficulty—Jeanne broke in—

"I see well my spell is not quite over," she said a little scornfully. "Let him pass: I admit all that he can say, save that I yielded to the temptation whereby he beheld me assailed, which is false. But what other witness have ye? Let me see him; what witness? I would know what witness?"

"There is reason for your anxiety, Jeanne," said Cauchon, with savagely kindling eyes. "It is one that, unnaturally audacious and unfeeling as thou art, even thou wilt not dare to treat with contumely. You did me little good in my country, and I have done you less in yours! Where is Jacob d'Arc? Admit him."

As he spoke, a little door in the open brass screenwork before the

altar opened, and an old man with long white hair came staggering dizzily forth, led by two vergers of the chapel. He advanced a few paces as if scarcely conscious of what he was doing, and then, uttering a piercing cry, rushed forward, and clasped Jeanne in his embrace—who vainly strove to open her manacled arms to receive it,—exclaiming in tones that went through the hardest heart, "My child! my child!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE REVELATION.

"So muckel sorrow hadde never creature,
That is, or shall be, while the world may dure."—*Chaucer.*

For some moments even the merciless Cauchon was affected with the agony of the scene he had produced, while Jeanne and her sire abandoned themselves to one which united joy and anguish almost too powerfully for humanity to sustain. But the judge quickly perceived that the spectacle of the meeting of the bereaved father and his child began to produce a very different effect from what he had intended. He therefore hastened to interrupt it.

"Jacobus," he said sternly, "it was not that you might fool us out of these womanish drops that you came or were brought hither."

"Nay, my most reverend lord; nay, Jeanne, it was not for this. O God, what was it for?" exclaimed the old man with a bewildered stare. "Yes, yes, I remember, it was to save thee, my child, my precious lost one! Ah, Jeanne, Jeanne! remember I came not near thee in thy wicked glories and power at Rheims; I asked nothing of thee, accepted nothing! Thine uncle is rich with thy ungodly gold; I am impoverished by the villanous Burgundians, who ravaged our village in hatred of thee. But I am come to thee now in thy disgrace and ruin and chains—when the Evil One has deserted thee—to bid thee in turn desert him. Turn and spit in the face of Satan, my child! confess thy woeful compact with him—confess all thy sins—and demand the pardon and peace of the Church, which will not be denied thee, and return with me to our village, where yet we may be happy—where all shall be forgiven—where thy mother will smile again, and thy father's weary eyes be closed by thy best loved and gentle hand!"

"Father, thou too! thou amidst my betrayers!" said Jeanne staring aghast at her sire. "No, this is one of the visions of my madness! I have been mad all along; I have fallen asleep in the hot noonday under the fairy tree, and the sun has seared my brain I dream all this!"

"Would thou didst! But, my child, confide no longer in the spell. The fairy tree itself is withered; the lightnings struck it and nothing but a blackened trunk remains!" groaned the miserable old man.

"Hast thou burned my beautiful beech-tree, too, Cauchon?" exclaimed Jeanne with a true inspiration of anger which made the prelate start on his tribunal. "False priest and betrayer! descend from that usurped seat, and own on thy knees, if thou hast yet the grace to pray, that it was thy messengers, and not the lightning of Heaven, that destroyed my beauteous tree!"

"Thou seest, Jeanne, thy conjurations have at least no power over me," replied Cauchon, calmly. "I anticipated but little that an old man's tears could melt thine obstinacy; but the hardest of belief must now be satisfied of thy guilt—and charity compelled me to leave no means untried. And now remove the old man, and let the judgment proceed."

"He is old, 'tis true—my father is old; and the more shame therefore to ye who have abused him thus!" said Jeanne, gazing with grief-struck eyes at her miserable parent, who, unable to utter a word, but wringing his hands frantically, turned from his daughter to her judges, and from the judges to his daughter, in a dreadful pantomime. "Ha, Cauchon! I could have forgiven thee aught but this; and yet ye who see it call yourselves human! Take him away, in very troth. But father, dearest father, I recall my words; I did not say that thou hast aided them in their work! They have deceived thee; I know it, and my dying words shall bless thee! Take him away indeed; let him go free; and, father, tell my mother—take him away, if ye would not burst my heart, and so be cheated of your vengeance!"

"I will not go; ye shall not drag me with red-hot pincers, unless she goes with me!" said Jacob d'Arc, recovering, but still bewilderedly, his faculties. "She is my daughter; I have found her again; give her to me, and she shall never harm ye any more!"

"We will take better care of her than thou canst, or wilt, judging by the past," said Cauchon. "Thou hearest, old man, she will not repent, will not confess! Depart, and leave her to a doom of which thyself canst not deny the merits!"

"Nay, fear not for me, my father; all the swords of all these soldiers, all the lies and malice of all these priests, have no power over me!" said Jeanne, in a lofty tone. "Leave me now; I shall be with thee anon."

"She believes still in her whispering familiars. Methought I saw some shadow at her ear!" exclaimed Cauchon; and even the father retreated from the neighbourhood of his child.

"Ah, wilt thou still trust in them, Jeanne? Have they not deceived thee to this pass?" said the miserable old man.

"No, nor am I deserted as thou deemest, father! Let this be the compact between us: if I come not forth free and unscathed to liberty and triumph from these dungeons, deem me the worst mine enemies have called me!" said Jeanne.

"With this condition, bid her farewell for ever, and depart!" said Cauchon imperiously; and Jacob d'Arc made a faltering effort to return to his child's embrace. But the emotion of the dreadful scene overcame him at the instant, and he fell senseless into the

arms of Wulfstan of Warbois, who kindly and mercifully carried him out of the chapel.

After this mournful episode, the judges proceeded to deliver their verdict in the order they were called upon by Cauchon. There was a tremulous reluctance in the manners of some which irritated both him and the English audience. Luckily for themselves, these waverers had nearly all brought their verdict written out! and, terrified by the noise and angry murmurs of the English, no man ventured to make any alteration in his judgment or consequent sentence.

The sentence in cases of obstinate persistance in error was of a kind which Jeanne herself anticipated in her answer to the bishop's demand whether she was now prepared to make a recantation of her heresies, since they were pronounced such by an unanimous ecclesiastical judgment.

"If I saw the flame lighted, the fagots heaped, the executioner with his torch, myself amidst the flames—no!"

"Would it be proper to apply some torture to make her confess?" said Frater Johannes, resuming his nature or habitude.

"No, brother, I see not that it will be of any use. I abandon her to the arm of secular justice," returned Cauchon, rising.

"And I—and I—and I," resounded on all sides, as the judges rose in a body.

"And I—appeal from your judgment to the judgment of God!" exclaimed Jeanne, fervently clasping her chained hands, and gazing upward.

"Thou shalt have it—in fire!" said Cardinal Beaufort, impetuously. "Appeal rather to thy dark gods, for to-morrow thou shalt to the ordeal! Look, look at her—not a tear has she, like a true witch; while those who hate her, and have much cause, weep torrents! Hence with her, foul thing! and to-morrow the sun shall shine on her the last time, and brighten again for England."

"No, scarlet priest! Never again shall the sun of France shine joyously on the crouching leopards of England!" returned the Maid, for the first time turning and facing the audience, chiefly composed of her noble and knightly enemies—and the brightness of inspiration returned to her whole appearance. "Slay me ye may perchance, for I am in your hands, if God will suffer it; but undo my work ye cannot! I have loosened a torrent that will not cease to roar until it has swept ye back into the seas ye never should have crossed! Victory after victory shall deck the arms of my king, until heralds and aged monks can hardly reckon them! Paris shall open her gates, and receive him more joyfully than children their mother when she returns with fruit and bread from the market! and within as many years as I have spoken words, an Englishman shall be as rare in France as the accursed beast that crouches for its prey upon your standards!"

"Peace, babbling witch! peace, or by my halidame, I will cut thine evil prophecies short in thy throat!" shouted the truculent earl of Stafford, starting on his feet, and grasping his dagger.

"Peace, thou foolish Stafford!" exclaimed the Regent, tearing him violently back by the belt. "Dost thou think the king bought her so dearly to make pastime for thy butcher-knife? Go now in safety to thy dungeon, Jeanne! and pray to Heaven or to hell, whichever thou wilt; but unless thou dost recant and confess thy sorceries and those of the rebel assassin, Charles of Valois, to-morrow assuredly earthly flames shall burn thee into everlasting ones!"

With a look and manner altogether unappalled even by this terrific menace, Jeanne d'Arc was led away from the tribunal which had just pronounced her sentence—and its own. Her usual escort of spearmen instantly surrounded her, and by them she was led into her place of confinement under the great tower of the castle of Rouen.

It was a dungeon of considerable extent, at a great depth in the foundations of the fortress, lighted only by a feeble glimmer which during a portion of the day descended the open well-staircase in a circular tower leading to it. This mockery of day had still to pass through the thickly-woven bars of an iron grating which admitted to a second long, narrow flight of steps landing on the floor of the dungeon. There were two other doors of similar material apparently opening by dark archways into other parts of the subterraneous prison, whence a cold damp air blew at times as if from the yawning jaws of a whale. In one corner of this chamber was a miserable truckle bed, strewed with straw, and garnished with a counterpane, some mouldy blankets, and a log of wood for a pillow. Immediately above it, in the naked stone wall, were two strong rings of iron, to which Jeanne's chain was always fastened with a padlock, so as to leave her only the melancholy range of its clanking links for exercise or slumber.

According to custom, the verdurer secured this chain while Fastolfe and his soldiers remained at the iron grating above. But Jeanne was buried so profoundly in thought that she scarcely noticed the performance of the habitual ceremony, until having accomplished it, she suddenly became aware that the verdurer paused, and looked at her with an extraordinarily wistful and sorrowful countenance.

"It will be the last time unless she repents and confesses, and the old qualm is upon me again!" he muttered to himself. "Is she at her old tricks again, for it goes so hard against my grain to fasten her up like a heifer here for slaughter, that were it not that 'tis impossible—Ah! poor wench," he continued, addressing her with great earnestness, "I speak not your tongue of France so well as I could wish, but in such as I have I do entreat you, take mercy on your goodly carcase, and do not give yourself to be broiled like a spring pullet, and your soul to be damned; but confess your witchcrafts and let us all be at peace again!"

"Rest thee content, good soldier, I shall not perish, though I seem in such jeopardy," replied Jeanne, calmly. "Farewell, for perchance I shall not see thee again; and I leave thee with this word, that amidst all mine enemies—and thou hast been no light one to me—I do believe thou art the only true and honest one!"

"She cannot ride away on a broomstick, for she hath none at hand,"

mused Wulfstan, aloud; and the tears started in his eyes as he continued, "but go how thou canst or mayst, I will not say in God's name, provided thou dost not pass my post; for, witch as thou art, I had methinks no liefer see thee burned than mine own old English mother!"

Jeanne d'Arc was left alone in darkness and the silence of her dungeon. But the magic of hope and imagination illumined even this gloom, and peopled even this solitude. Far from viewing with horror and fear the approach of her menaced doom, the Maid of Orleans, strong in the promises of the false St. Margaret, expected that it would only hasten the celestial preparations for her deliverance: no time would be lost, since the catastrophe which must else engulf her was threatened so immediately, and the meditations of Jeanne d'Arc were for a long time merely an ecstatic series of conjectures on the manner in which her escape would be effected. The various means adopted by angels and heavenly messengers of former times in the redemption of saints from their captivities and dangers, passed in splendid review before the well-stored imagination of the religious heroine of Domremy. The joy and triumph of eluding the vigilant hatred of her enemies, of once more breathing the sweet air of liberty, of reviving by her miraculous restoration and presence, the flagging fortunes of France, made up altogether so rich a dream of hope, that the most delicious fruition never surpassed the happiness of her reverie.

Jeanne could not indeed guess how she should be redeemed, chained in the depths of a massive fortress, in a city of enemies, surrounded by unnumbered watchful jailers and sentinels, without a manifest and stupendous miracle. At times, however, a hope more beautiful and cheering than even the expectation of a celestial presence that would enable her to glide like light from her captivity, breathed through her soul in music. She imagined that her king, her royal Charles, the comrades of her victories, the armies she had led, might have secretly determined on effecting her rescue by force of arms, might by stealthy marches be approaching Rouen, even then might silently be planting their ladders, preparing to scale the walls, and pour to the deliverance of their deliverer! The rapturous happiness of receiving life and liberty from the hands of her king was to the hapless heroine a brighter and more gorgeous hope than to welcome them from those of an archangel.

So absorbedly did this brilliant reverie possess her, that when suddenly a light darted through the bars of her dungeon, and some figures appeared at it, she started up in the almost certain expectation of beholding either the glittering arms of her king and of Dunois, or the resplendent robes, white as the sun, in which her glorious fancies robed her heavenly visitants. It was a contrast, strong as the essence of all that eternally exists between imagination and reality, when the door grated open, and Wulfstan made his appearance, lighting with a torch the tremulous steps of a bare-footed friar, closely cowled, and with the rope of a cordelier round his waist. Fastolfe followed him.

"Jeanne!" said the fallen dragon knight, in a hollow voice, and

it was almost the first time he had spoken to her since she was confided to his custody, "I have brought a confessor to thee: I would not have thee perish, both body and soul! The judges commanded that none should visit thee; but this good man hath presented himself, and so earnestly entreated to be allowed to exhort thee from thine obstinate persistance in damnation, that I have not refused."

"I thank thee for this at least!—Good father, who art thou?" replied the prisoner, gazing with piercing anxiety at her visitor.

"Ask not, my child! it is a dangerous service, should the bishop wot who I am or that I have dared to thwart his commands," replied the friar, in a weak undertone. "Leave us, sirs, for my work of charity is of such danger to myself that if, as it is said, she begins at home, I hazard much by tarriance here."

"To me also!" replied the knight. "But my oath could not be meant to extend to men having thy holy purpose and habits!"

"Win her to confess and recant, and save her poor soul and body together, father, and I will give you a dozen saluts instead of taking the crowns you offered me!" said Wulfstan. "Her confession of the witchcraft will suffice to clear my lord's noble honour; and since the devil has deserted her now, she may yet live to make some good man a good wife."

There was some degree of significance and even rough tenderness in these latter words, which were, however, altogether lost upon their object. Jeanne was absorbed in the survey of her unexpected visitor, and continued so while he turned his back upon her, and most anxiously watched until the dragon knight and his attendant had evidently reached the highest step in the circular staircase.

"I see thou recognizest me, Jeanne, my daughter; but, in very faith, I might well have mistaken thee for another!" said the friar, turning with an altered and familiar manner. "Why dost thou stare at me so with thine eyes? But thou dost well not to mention my name."

"Michael, art thou?—But where are thy rainbow wings, and thine arms dipped in the dazzling light?" replied Jeanne, dizzied with the brightness of the torch which Wulfstan had transferred to the friar.

"Nay, my child!—Dost thou not know me now?" said the cordelier, throwing back his cowl.

"Friar Richard!" said Jeanne, with an expression of visible surprise and disappointment.

"But do not utter my name, for dungeon walls are like little pitchers, and have long ears! Ah, this, indeed, is not Rheims!" replied the confessor. "Thou art right to be amazed to see me here, for I am amazed to see myself, and come at great risk; but that, to bar the worst, I bear the archbishop's written pledge to put all the prisoners in his hands to death if a hair of my head is hurt, and there is a Beaufort among them! Besides, who could dream to recognize in these miserable cordelier weeds the grand-prior Ricardus, who is to be abbot of Longueville if he succeeds in his perilous mission? But I must draw down my cowl,—thou knowest me now."

"Yes, very truly; but wherefore art thou here in peril?" said

Jeanne, remembering some of the friar's characteristics with a melancholy smile.

"The archbishop cannot bear that thou shouldst perish thus—and, indeed, it sat heavily on mine own conscience!" replied the friar, with some hesitation. "And now that thou art certainly condemned, thou seest at what a risk I have come to tell thee so, in this disguise—I that have not gone barefoot since we parted in Rheims!"

"The archbishop! Dost thou not come from the king?" exclaimed Jeanne. "Do not trifle with me, monk, but tell me instantly, is he at hand with his chivalry? Do my glorious king and his knights storm Rouen, and will it be his gentle voice that shall call Jeanne from her dungeon to liberty?"

"Poor child, poor child! will nothing waken her from her dreams?" said the grand-prior of St. Remy. "Alas, no; the king is in Bourges, for aught I know, feasting by waxlight, or worse, with my Lady of Beauty! And for that reason, among a million, did my lord the archbishop send thee his express commands not to think of perishing for a king so unmindful of past services, that he seems scarcely to remember there was ever such a personage in existence as the Maid of Orleans!"

"Nay, now, monk, thou jestest at an ill season!—for all time shall scarcely forget that!" replied Jeanne, with a singular grandeur of look. "Do not play with me, or feed me slowly with hopes as 'tis said they should famished wretches with crumbs! Thou art here, I know, and from the king! Ay, and perchance—speak it out, fear not that I shall die of joy—is Rouen ours?"

"Art thou mad, Jeanne?" replied the cordelier, impatiently. "If not, thou art wasting precious time! I swear to thee, by the bones of the blessed patron of our order, that I am here from the archbishop of Rheims, and no other, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, no one else of all thy summer friends has spoken a word, or cared a thought, in thy behalf!"

"What!" exclaimed Jeanne, starting up from her couch so wildly that her chains rattled again. "Dost thou mean, dost thou say, dost thou dare to say, that King Charles has not sent thee to offer a kingdom's ransom, prayers, threats, oaths to do the like as shall be done to me on all the English either now in his power, or that shall ever mishap to fall into it?"

"No, no, my poor child!—a thousand times no; but all this comes of thy slighting the advice I gave thee at Rheims, wherein thou art the more to blame as it seemed to come from Heaven itself!" replied the friar. "La Trimouille has persuaded the king that it is beneath the dignity of his crown to sue to his enemies for mercy, and so it is! that if thou art guilty of these sorceries, he would therein assume to himself a large share of the blame and shame!—if innocent, the arch-rogue pretends, and pleasantly challenged my lord the archbishop to deny it, that the Church would dismiss thee safe and sound from its clutches!"

"If guilty! if innocent! Doth Charles, the king, hear these words and not smite the sayer dead?" said Jeanne, with a thunderstruck

and yet incredulous look. "If so, I have lived long enough, and 'tis time indeed to die!"

"Thou hast lived long enough for him and his ungrateful peers, but thou hast not lived a moment yet for thyself, poor innocent!" replied the cordelier. "It is full time thou shouldst begin to do so, and thou canst not tell how pleasant it is to live for oneself only, and have the means! Consider, what can Charles of France and the rest think of thy marvellous deeds, seeing that Heaven in no way interferes to prevent so horrible a close to them as awaits thee? Wouldst thou not thyself deem it magic in another? And thus they prate at court, and say that if thou art a saint, Heaven knows how to take care of its own! Now, wherefore, I pray thee, shouldst thou die for wretches that can jest in a matter like this? for certainly thou wilt be burned to cinders if thou dost not recant! The king, whom thou hast crowned, to speak the very truth, and within the margin, deserts thee to thy fate as carelessly as a schoolboy his fleet of nutshells when he is weary of the sport! La Trimouille rules everything, and his very wife bade me tell thee he has vowed thy destruction, and rejoices greatly that the English should effect it for him! The nobles and knights refuse to allow any threats of retaliation to be held out, much less deeds to be done, lest their own sweet carcasses should be put in danger for one who, they say, was an ill comrade at best! The cities thou hast redeemed plead utter poverty in reply to hints of ransom! The queen herself never opens her prim mouth in thy favour, for she deems, by my Lady of Beauty's jealousy, that thou didst play her a false trick on the journey of Rheims! And it were little use if she prayed night and day in thy behalf, while my Lady of Beauty is so mad against thee! In short, the good archbishop and I are the only two that have any remorse—compassion, I mean—on thee, and exhort and command thee not to perish for a sovereign, a court, and a people so ungrateful!"

There was a pause, and when Jeanne spoke at last, it was in a broken and scarcely intelligible rhapsody. "O Charles, my king! I who crowned thee at Rheims! O Orleans, I who gave thy famine bread, and redeemed thy blood with mine own!! O battle-brothers, I who restored glory to your names, and your children to their inheritance! Ah, friar, it is time indeed for me to die; it is well; and I will die as I have lived—unvanquished, unyielding! And has it all come to this! A horrible death, nothing but death, for all my toils and sacrifice! Let me kneel, monk; let me kneel and ask of God whether He has made humanity human! If not, wherefore hath He sent me on earth with this human heart, alive and throbbing in my breast?"

"Kneel not, Jeanne, nor clamour so loudly; we have no time to lose even in prayer!" returned Friar Richard. "Humanity is but too human, my child, if thou only knew it! It is all for itself! It is thou that art not human, that hast sacrificed thy blooming years and hopes with such mad and unthanked generosity! But he has not gone too far who can return, nor she either: and therefore ——"

"Speak to me no more, but leave me to complete my work!" interrupted Jeanne. "Go thou, too, and let me be alone amidst all things!

Heaven sent me forth on this mission, and by this blackness in m heart, warns me that it would have me perish to expiate—O, fathe friar, you know not my guilt, nor wherefore our Lady has abandone me to doom! I dared not confess to thee in Rheims, nor since, t others of thy holy office; and I dreamed I had choked the serpen silently in my heart! It is not so. I loved Charles of France! love him still, as women should not love the husband of another!— and for this cause is my cup of destruction handed to me by him; as but for him, I were not now in this dungeon, but peacefully at hom with my woful father, amidst the sweet green summer fields!"

"Unhappy one! I guessed as much, I knew as much!" replie Richard. "The more reason then for thee, Jeanne, to shun th dread fate that yawns for thee; for if thou perishest thus, thou perishest in mortal sin!"

Jeanne started back, as if from some new and unimagined horror visually present. "Say not this, say not this, friar! Wrench no my heart from my bosom, to leave me a shivering coward, belying mine whole life in its close!" she exclaimed. "Oh, say not this i so! That to love without hope, without desire, nay, with dread, wit sorrow, with repulse!—Oh, say not that to die with this in my hear is perdition! But how hast thou known or guessed what scarcely dared whisper to mine own soul?"

"The jests of the courtiers, the triumphant smiles of the king; bu fear not that I share the thoughts that calumniate thee. I know thine innocence of all substantial offence!" said the cordelier, wit considerable hesitation. "Thou marvellest how, and I will tell thee for facts only can reason with thy despair! Thou didst avow al methinks to the angel of the crown, in Loches?—and I was he! M child, it were too great a pity that thou shouldst die for a dream Hadst thou not been so simple, and dwelt all thy life in fields or rud camps, had not thy fancy lent unreal splendour to all that entered it even as sunshine gilds a dunghill, thou wouldst long since hav detected our mummery! A Parisian child would have known, fo example, that it was Friar Richard and his brethren of the Passio enacting a morality of the temptation of some virgin saint aroun thee, at the Fairy Tree of Domremy, when the mission was given t thee which thou didst compass beyond all hope! Therein did myself represent the noble personage of Saint Michael, which I ha oft done before to the general wonder, in a beautiful mask and armour with wings of a bird of Araby thou hast never seen, larger than th mightiest eagle, many times! Do not look upon me, Jeanne, wit such glazed and horrible eyes, or thou wilt affright me out of speech Listen! Was not this the voice of Michael, and these his words?"

And the religious actor, assuming with singular rapidity the very voice and attitude of the saint whose attributes he had usurped, repeated *verbatim* the rhymed address with which he had echoed an confirmed into resolutions the promptings of Jeanne d'Arc's heroi patriotism.

Friar Richard was somewhat alarmed at the fixed stare with which she contemplated him during this brief exhibition, and at the strange

manner with which at the conclusion she approached him, slightly lifted his Franciscan robe, and looked attentively at his feet. She then let it fall with a deep gasping sigh, and gazed steadfastly in his face with an expression that made him actually dread that she was become insane.

"Dost thou not know me, Jeanne?" he said, at last, with great trepidation.

"Yea, liar, and prince of lies! I know thee now!" replied the captive, with eyes that flashed indeed like those of madness. "I know thee, though thou hast taken a form as different from thine own as might be—a good and simple-hearted friar's, and thou the fiend? What, dost thou think to cheat me by tramping it without the cloven hoof? Back to thy fiery kingdom, for I know thee too well to be cheated by thy honeyed droppings of poison! Thou art he who sate whispering by my restless couch of fever, and bade me brain myself against these pitiless walls when the chains irked me most! And now thou comest to take from me my last hold in this vast wreck! Avaunt, Satan! this is thy worn-out trick—thy shroud of despair, wherewith thou veilest heaven from the eyes of the dying martyrs—but not from mine! I see the blue stars rejoicing in their brightness around the throne of God, even through this black arching mountain of stone above us! Liar! long ere I beheld Friar Richard I had visions! I saw the saints walking the earth with feet that scattered light like waves around a bather's feet! They spoke with me! they prayed with me! they wept with me!—long ere I saw the good man's face whose outward form thou hast stolen as he slept! An angel comes to me even now in my dungeon, and promises me an assured deliverance!"

"They were, and are, delusions of thy young enthusiasm, wrought by solitude and thought to frenzy," replied the friar. "Look on me! I sign myself with the cross; I call upon the blessed name of Jesus—from which the fiends shrink as darkness from the light, to bear witness that I am what I seem! Heaven works by human means, my child, since the time of the miracles! Therefore it may well be that thy mission was from heaven, that gave thee a heart more valiant than the boldest chivalry, and fancies as radiant—and sent me seasonably into thy country to take advantage of mine observations to save France, as the sun brings forth the flower from the seed sown in wild places by the wind of heaven. And now, after the same fashion, God and our Lady will that thou shouldst be saved by human means!"

"What means? what human means?" replied Jeanne with a delirious laugh and a ghastly glare round her dungeon's massive walls. "There are none! Or wilt thou, blasphemous deceiver! if such thou art, appear before the tribunal that has condemned me, and save me by confessing that Jeanne d'Arc was a poor toy and puppet of a crafty priest, and saved France by a lie?"

"Nay, for it would do no good, and great harm. They would not believe me; they would consider me as your familiar, and would hold it for a juggle to save my witch, and would, perhaps, roast me with

thee! Besides it would overwhelm us all—the king, the Church itself—with the disgrace of a fraud! But, thy redemption is in thine own hands. Knowing the truth, as now thou dost, what is to hinder thee from avowing thyself in error—from making a public recantation? They cannot burn thee then! The worst they can do will then be to imprison thee for life, on bread and water. But thou wert ever sparing and peasant-like in thy repasts; and while there is life there is hope! The king and France will grow ashamed, and redeem thee either by money or force from thine enemies! Thou mayst yet live to see the sun again, and the glitter of arms that was wont to make thine eye catch fire as it ran along the lines of battle! Thou wilt see thy pretty village again, and thy dogs, and the quiet fields! Thou wilt live to be a comfort to thy parents, and to win thy father to recall his curse! Thou wilt live to enjoy the reward and honour of thy great deeds, instead of broiling and bursting like a chestnut—instead of perishing perhaps with danger to thine immortal soul, seeing thou art not cured of thy wrong love! Nay, thou mayst live to win an ample return from *him*, for even beauty palls, and Agnes may lose favour; and there is a wild grandeur in thy look and bearing that——"

"Peace, peace! if thou wouldst not madden me, devil or friar! for I know not which," interrupted Jeanne, with a calmer but more dreadful concentration of emotions. "Not even to perish left me! to have lost all for glory, and not even glory left me! Mercy, sweet Jesu! for now do I remember me, how the brightness I saw in the fountain that day I left Domremy, hardened into solid fire!"

"And feel, do but feel, Jeanne, what torture it were to die in flames! Put your little finger into the torch but for a moment," said the cordelier, with increasing earnestness. "I was in marvellous doubt, whether to venture among the Philistines, until it chanced that I burned my hand with a huge scalding drop of wax as I was setting my great seal to a chartulary, and then so deep a pity came upon me when I thought of thee, that,——but we are wasting time, and I am in grievous peril in Rouen. Promise me to recant, and let me depart in peace."

"Ay, but thou hadst not a pain within that mocked at any thou couldst feel without! Look, I can dash myself on the hard earth in my chains without feeling it!" exclaimed the wo-begone prisoner, literally dashing herself on the floor of her dungeon in the frenzy of her despair. "Why, it is cool and soft compared with your pities and rocky hearts, lord prior! No, no, no! let me to the stake, to death, and doom! Nothing worse can happen me than to live, and know and feel this at my heart; and if, as thou sayest, I am mad, perchance there is neither God, nor angels, nor heaven, nor earth, nor judgment,—nothing but everlasting ignorance and peace—in death!"

"Thou art raving now indeed, nor dare I stay longer to reason with thee," said Richard, greatly alarmed, and striving in vain in his agitation to raise her. "There is mercy for thee yet, I say, if thou wilt take it! Bethink thee, Jeanne, thy spring of years, thy goodly body claim from thee some mercy on thyself! Wilt thou give thy

warm and healthy blood to be lapped and drunk by hungry fire? Think if thou canst bear to die a death so full of pangs?"

"I pray thee, friar, let me try! My fair beech-tree is withered by fires from heaven, they say; it will never blossom more, nor shall I; but it is well for the tree to fall while the blossoms and leaves of spring are there to deck its decay," replied Jeanne, in a strange tone of tranquillity. "Good people drive this devil hence! I am brought here to die, and of our Lady's love, I beseech you, let it be in peace! —Or, shall we be like the autumn, that decks itself in its richest garb to perish? Give me some festival robes, such as the Lady of Beauty wears, and, crowned with flowers and crimson, mad with wine, let us rush to death and doom!—Ha, ha! it is beneath the dignity of Charles's crown to pray for mercy on the sorceress! Who gave it him with its dignity? The lady of Trimouille was right, and a soother prophetess than I, whom they were wont to call one, when I prophesied good to them! Friar, if we should not meet again, tell her from me,—hearken! is she not a minstreless?"

"Ay, but one of a wicked story and a murderous past," said the friar, trembling violently, though glad to turn Jeanne's thoughts into what seemed a calmer channel.

"No matter; she fathomed my heart, and knew what my destiny was to be," said the hapless heroine. "Bid her frame some ballad of my deeds, such as grey-haired grandames love to tell, and let her say that Charles of France!—tell Charles of France from me, good monk, that dying, I bequeath to him and to his race the perpetual ingratitude which he has shown,—for it will last for ever, pursue me to heaven itself! It is here in my heart, eternally! Oh, bid him remember Rheims, and ask was it well done to let Jeanne be burned in Rouen?"

"Hearken! some one calls me!" said the friar, bursting into irrepressible tears. "I must be gone,—but most glorious and best of women, make me not thy murderer! Nay, thou shalt not! I warn thee, I, thy spiritual guide and father, that if thou perishest thus in this impenitent mood, thou art in mortal sin, and committest also the deadly offence of suicide. Reflect upon these words, and so farewell!"

"Farewell, farewell!—I should need ages, and have but a few hours, to think in! I begin now to understand mankind!—and did He who made them, perish for them?" muttered Jeanne, rising, and seating herself on her couch. "Be not afraid, I am not mad, nor shall be! I begin to understand what we all are, and why I am here. Such as I am, have committed some great sin in the stars where we first lived, and so are exiled to the earth to be tortured by fiends called men! We have no friends, no companions, no joy, no happiness, no hope on earth! Therefore farewell is a good word, and, friar, I say to thee farewell, in all love and heartiness.—Methinks there is one come for thee."

She pointed as she spoke to the figure of Wulfstan of Warbois, half thrust in at the iron grate above, with a countenance full of anxiety and expectation.

"I am coming, good brother. Her mind is shaken," mused Richard, "but it is by nature so strong and well poised, that she will soon regain the balance, and see how truly I have advised her to her interest. Farewell, my daughter,—wilt thou not give me thine hand, and say thou dost forgive my share in so necessary an illusion?"

"I must give them both; they are manacled together," replied the Maid, somewhat mechanically suiting the action to the word. But this last stroke of generosity and goodness fairly overcame even the grand-prior of St. Remy, and he retired up the dungeon steps, weeping and sobbing so loudly, that he was audible to the summit of the tower.

"Will she not confess, and save her poor body from the flames?" said Wulfstan, in a very disappointed tone.

"I have good hopes of her, brother; she is in a better frame of mind than when I came," replied the friar, looking back when he reached the top of the dungeon. "Thou seest she is in a deep meditation that will scarcely fail to bear good fruit; therefore, interrupt her not, but surely she cannot but yield when her veriest enemies exhort her to it out of truth and compassion. Jeanne! Jeanne! do not give thine enemies such joy and triumph, and give thy false friends the only chastisement that is in thy power, by an open confession of thy faults, which will redeem thee from their hands! Oh, thou mayst well believe, the gifts that have brought thee to this misery, and in that haunted place, were given thee by fiends!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE RECANTATION.

"We are the ministers of pain and fear,
And disappointment, and mistrust, and hate,
And clinging crime; and as lean dogs pursue
Through wood and lake some struck and sobbing fawn,
We track all things that weep, and bleed, and live,
When the great King betrays them to our will."—*Shelley.*

THE morning of the expected sacrifice arrived—the 24th of May, and found nearly the whole population of Rouen assembled in the great market-place before the Abbey-church of St. Ouen. A scaffold was erected beneath the grand window of the ancient and magnificent edifice mentioned, hung with black cloth, and destined to be occupied by the ecclesiastical judges. The galleries and even roof of the abbey were crowded with spectators of distinction, and the Regent, with his kingly nephew and a retinue of knights and nobles, stood within the open window, to observe the consummation of their vengeance, or overawe the populace with their presence.

The people of Rouen had in truth exhibited signs of discontent and compassion for the accused, which induced the Regent to hurry on and pursue her doom with more ruthless violence than at first. Great

masses of English archers surrounded the abbey, and occupied its churchyard, while numerous banners waving from the ornamented casements of the houses in the square revealed that they also were in military possession. In the countenances of these men there was something savagely triumphant and bloodthirsty, which only the preternatural terrors from which they imagined the deed about to be perpetrated would free them, could have given to the usually frank and kindly English visage.

The populace seemed thoroughly overawed by the preparations, or by a knowledge of the ferocious spirit that possessed their conquerors. At all events, there was no sign of popular feeling evinced when the judges made their appearance on the scaffold, headed by the haughty English cardinal. Perhaps they were daunted by the magnificence of the sacerdotal group, including several bishops, abbots of great state and wealth, and a multitude of canons and doctors, in their scarlet robes—all personages wont to impose awe and respect even when they appeared singly. The people continued to gaze at these ecclesiastics, or at the preparations for the execution, with doubtful emotions of fear and wonder. The preparations consisted of an extremely high stake, hung with a chain to fasten the victim, and heaped all around with huge fagots of fir and barrels of tar, ready to be staved. There was a large parchment, which turned round like the vanes of a windmill, on it, and bore this inscription: "Johanna! hæresis, sortilega, scandalosa, blasphema in Deum!"

It was early in the morning of a beautiful spring day, but the splendour of the sun seemed to deck unnaturally a scene of such horror and death. It deepened both by the contrast of its living gaiety and pomp. The same might almost be said of the appearance of the bishop of Beauvais, who arrived with an excess of sacerdotal magnificence that still did not conceal from observers the gnawings of his guilty conscience even in the moment when his triumph seemed achieved. There was something almost satanic in the piercing glare he cast among his accomplice judges, to ascertain that none was absent from his post, aud in the smile of satisfied contempt with which he found that all were there, to perjure and endanger their own souls in forwarding his ends.

There was a dreamy impression both among the partisans and enemies of Jeanne d'Arc, that something supernatural might very reasonably be expected to occur and prevent the execution of her sentence. Not one of either mass indeed imagined that her own great heart would yield; her former career and dauntless demeanour hitherto satisfied all men on this point. But the English soldiers were haunted with a vague dread that the sorceress would display some marvel of her tremendous art and effect her escape; while those of the French whose opinion was not in suspense expected some visible interposition of the celestial powers.

The curiosity was intense when the rumble of wheels and the tumultuous movement of a great throng in the direction of the castle of Rouen announced the approach of the condemned sorceress or saint. And unbounded were the wonder and disappointment of some

when, instead of the erect and defiant heroine they all expected to see, a woman, resembling a ghastly and lack-lustre-eyed youth, came borne in a low broad-wheeled cart, such as is still used in Normandy for agricultural purposes, crouching forward on her bosom, and apparently nearly insensible to all that happened around her. An armed man sat on each side of the prisoner, on the car, holding her securely by the ends of her fetters and manacles. They were Wulfstan of Warbois and his lord. Both of these custodians looked more hopeful and less gloomy than they had done since the commencement of the trial; a circumstance imputed by those who did not know the real reason, to revenge in one, and satisfaction at being rid of a perilous task in the other.

That which she had restored to France had departed from the heart of Jeanne d'Arc. The ingratitude and desertion of her own countrymen had done what the swords of her enemies never yet had compassed; or rather, with the belief in the supernatural support and direction of her mission, that which gave her more than human courage to dare and endure had departed, and her woman's heart quailed before the complicated horrors and anguish of her doom.

Even Cauchon was alarmed at the dreamy nervelessness of her look.

"Make not your exhortation too long nor too severe, brother," he whispered to the doctor, Guillaume Erard, who was appointed to preach what might be called the funeral sermon of Jeanne d'Arc, in her living ears.

But Guillaume Erard was too full of his subject, and flattered with the opportunity of displaying his erudition and devotion before so great an audience, to take any other heed of this command than to acknowledge that he heard it, with a reverent bow. He then mounted a portable pulpit which had been conveyed to the scene of action, close beside the car and the victim. The latter halted near the stake and pile, and a deformed man in a red mantle, gliding from the crowd, appeared to busy himself in arranging the fagots with artistic skill. He was the executioner of Paris, purposely brought to assure the citizens of the capital of the destruction of their enemy.

Guillaume Erard took his text from the Gospel of St. John. "The branch cannot bear fruit unless it remain on the vine." And he proceeded to show in what manner this branch which was about to be cast into flames, had separated itself from the tree planted by Jesus Christ, was withered and sapless as the accursed fig-tree and therefore merited the fate to which it was condemned.

Guillaume Erard had made the art of exorcism the main study of his long life, and was in full possession of the whole theory and practice of the diabolical science imputed to Jeanne d'Arc. The frightful imaginings of a melancholy and superstitious fancy were in him countenanced by the resources of an immense erudition—theological erudition, at least. Jeanne herself, in the confusion and horror of her thoughts, almost shared the emotions of terror or doubt which the preacher raised against her when delineating her career by the fearful light his credulity and cruelty lent the scene.

He showed how from the earliest ages of mankind the devil had always tempted women in the way wherein it was clearly proved he had entangled Jeanne d'Arc. The love of power and superiority—a recklessness of the means of obtaining either—was natural to a creature at once so ambitious and so weak. It was the thirst for power, and knowledge, which is power, that induced the mother of mankind to eat the forbidden fruit, and bring her race under the perpetual interdict which the Church only had the power to remove by the sacrament of baptism. To win men to renounce the inestimable advantages of this redemption from the original sin was the ceaseless object of the powers of hell, and they grudged no toil, no pains, to obtain it. It was they who had surrounded the progress of Jeanne d'Arc with terrific portents and seeming success for a brief time, which Heaven permits to the tempter, as the potter permits his pots to be assayed at a mighty heat, to ascertain which are sound and unflawed, and fit to hold precious oils and wines.

Save that her eye a little brightened, and she raised her head as if to listen more attentively while the preacher enumerated the glories of her career as proofs of her compact with the fiend, Jeanne seemed to continue lost in an endless and wandering reverie, as if she pursued some idea in her mind which she could not distinctly discern. Even when the preacher entered into the obscene details with which he illustrated his doctrine of a monstrous amour between the devil and her whom he assiduously styled the "so-called" Maid of Orleans, and illustrated it by examples drawn at discretion from the fathers of the Church and the romancers of the age, it was observed that no tinge of colour on the wan cheeks of Jeanne d'Arc came to bear witness to the modesty thus outraged. The prophet and magician Merlin, of the legends of the Round Table, Maître Guillaume mentioned as an undeniable evidence of the possibility of such abominable unions, Merlin being the offspring of a nun and of a fiend. St. Augustine, in his "City of God," it seemed, asserted, not only the possibility but the certainty of their misdeeds.

Cauchon was content with the effect produced by this dark harangue on the populace, but he suffered so much internally from anxiety and a dread eagerness to be assured of the triumph of his artifices, that he made repeated signals to the preacher to have done, ere he thought proper to notice them. Maître Guillaume in fact worked himself into a foaming frenzy of abuse and invective before he considered he had done justice to his subject, before he at length concluded, according to an established formula, by demanding of Jeanne whether she persisted in refusing submission to the Church, and would thus compel it to abandon her to the arm of secular justice?

"Justice! give me justice!" exclaimed Jeanne, with a sudden start of reanimation which made her chains rattle, and shook the hearts of all the auditors, each with its own terrors or expectations. At the same instant an old man forced his way through a mass of gazers to the very points of the archers' arrows, and frantically stretching his arms amidst their weapons to Jeanne, shrieked, "Con-

fess, confess, my child, and save thyself from everlasting flames! the fiend has deserted thee, desert him; for if thou perishest thus, thou perishest with thy father's curse upon thy head!"

These words from one whose appearance and distraction of grief abundantly confirmed him to be the relative he declared himself, completed the ruin of Jeanne d'Arc in the opinion of all the audience, including those most friendly to her cause.

"Ha, ha, my father too!" said Jeanne, raising herself and gazing with a wild, almost incredulous look at the grey-haired shepherd of Domremy. "That is well: now let us speak of other matters! Messires, I have been wofully deceived!—by fiends or men, I know not which, but all things have abandoned me! Let me speak, I will answer you, messire!—I submit myself and all my deeds to the Church; let us be sent to Rome, to our holy father the pope! he is human though a man! I blame no one for what I have done, neither my king nor any one else: what I have done I have done!"

"Dost thou mean to say, woman, that thou wilt here, before God, the people, and thy judges, recant and abjure all thy damnable heresies, magic, and treasons, divine and human?" thundered the bishop of Beauvais, impetuously advancing. "Or dost thou think we can waste years in seeking our lord the pope in his distant lands? Wherefore, then, hath he appointed us, his ordinaries and vicars, each in his own diocese? Thou must submit fully and absolutely to thy mother the Church, in our person and that of these clergymen well instructed in her laws and doctrines!"

"Say in these words, 'I abjure,' Jeanne, or thou wilt be burned!—burned for a few senseless sounds orderedly muttered, and called religion!" whispered one who seemed to speak in her ear like a fiend, inaudible to those around. It was the Canon Perrinet, who stood beneath the scaffold, unobserved.

Jeanne, however, uttered no sound, and seemed to await the worst in calm endurance. The bells of St. Ouen began to toll as for a funeral, and Cauchon, taking the hint, commenced hastily reading the horrible formula of the sentence which consigned a living, sentient being to the flames. But fast as he proceeded, the mind of Jeanne d'Arc travelled much faster through an eternity of thoughts, of regrets, of indignation, and remorse, fear and hope, utter disgust and weariness of life, terror of a death so terrible, and of the spiritual dismays that now surrounded it. Her eye had caught the distant glance of entreaty in that of a cordelier monk, closely cowled; and myriads of associations arose in her deadened and half-stupefied memory. She saw her grey-haired father, chalky-hued with despair; her enemies around, athirst for her blood; remembered how mercilessly she had been abandoned; gazed at the dreadful preparations for her destruction; the triumph in Cauchon's look; she had heard the subtle whisper which told her she was about to perish for a dream! The bright sky above her in some strange manner recalled the most lovely ideas of life and hope; and suddenly springing up in her chains, she called aloud, "Hold, bishop!—I ABJURE! Ye say

that I have been deceived; that my apparitions and revelations were false and feigned; and so I acknowledge them to be!"

If the scaffolding had suddenly given way beneath his feet, the prelate could not have been nor looked more astonished and dismayed at this unexpected break in his triumphant progress.

"What, Jeanne! thou indeed that wert so falsely called the Maid of Orleans!" he exclaimed, "wilt thou confess that thou hast lyingly feigned to have had revelations and apparitions from God; that thou hast seduced many to damnation; believed foolishly and lightly; offered superstitious sacrifices; worshipped the fiends; blasphemed God and his saints; violated his divine law and the holy Scriptures and the canons of the Church; gone in a dissolute garb, unseemly and against the decency of nature, and in all manner behaved thyself against the virtue and honesty of a woman?—presumptuously, thou a peasant, borne knightly arms, cruelly desirous of the effusion of human blood?—wilt thou confess thou hast despised God and his sacraments; made treasons, rebellions, and murders, worshipping and invoking demons to that purpose, and obscenely submitting thyself as a paramour to the fiend?"

"Let her sign her recantation, my lord!—it cannot be denied," said the abbot, Ægidius of Fécamp; and, as if released from some spell, nearly the whole body of the ecclesiastical judges arose and loudly declared that the recantation of the accused must be accepted, if she would sign it in due form.

The very form of abjuration was mysteriously in readiness: the inquisitor-vicar himself took a parchment from some one who handed it from below the scaffold, which was found to contain a full renunciation of all the heresies and magic imputed to Jeanne d'Arc in the articles so elaborately devised by the bishop of Beauvais.

"It is contrived among ye!—Thou, false bishop, art at the bottom of all this!" said Cardinal Beaufort, turning furiously on Cauchon.

"Cardinal, you lie!" returned the exasperated prelate, forgetting all respects in his wrath; but adding with politic rapidity, for Beaufort's hand was knit to strike him. "I pray your eminence to pardon me; I know not what I say in mine astonishment!—But she will not sign the recantation."

"She will, she will, lord bishop!—she has promised it!" now shouted Fastolfe. "She confesses her magic and sorceries; our fame is cleared, and what need we with a woman's blood?"

"Wilt thou sign this recantation, Jeanne, which makes thee and thy king for ever infamous?" bawled Cauchon, hanging half-way down from his elevation to the car, and furiously shaking the parchment at the prisoner.

"My child, my child, confess!" cried a voice of heart-rending supplication.

"'Tis false!—my king is a most Christian and noble king!—who dares to call him else?" said Jeanne, with wild vivacity. "But for myself I am the most worthless thing that crawls! Ye cannot call me worse than I know myself to be; give me the paper, and let all time lie like the rest of ye! But I cannot write, I am a poor

peasant!" she added vacantly, as her zealous ally beneath the scaffold handed her a pen and held up a long bottle of ink.

"Scrawl it as thou wilt; put thy cross—thou didst sign with a cross at Orleans, Jeanne!" exclaimed Fastolfe, eagerly snatching the parchment from the bishop and spreading it before the prisoner.

"She has confessed and recanted!" ran in incessant waves of sound over the vast multitude, and seemed to be repeated on remote eminences and steeples, so electric was the communication of the tidings to the most distant spectators. The profound respect and awe entertained for the acts of the Church prevented any manifestation of opinion, favourable or otherwise, until it was seen how its representatives would determine. Meanwhile Jeanne scrawled some wild imitation of a cross at the foot of the manuscript, and gave it back to Fastolfe with a vacant laugh as she tossed the pen aside.

"I will make a cross of this pen!" muttered the friendly personage beneath the scaffold. "But she might have taken the trouble to give it back civilly!"

"So then, sir bishop! this Lollard is to escape?" exclaimed Cardinal Beaufort.

"For the present at least, since it cannot be helped," said Cauchon, in a low thoughtful tone. "But leave it to me!—Perhaps nothing better could have happened than this recantation, which yet amazes me! What has subdued her soul to this lowliness that seemed to defy fate itself? But this proves to all the world, yea, to Heaven itself, that we have not condemned her unjustly, and gives me fresh spirit for the work! She confesses, and the renown of her ignominy shall equal that of her glory! She confesses, and her crimes shall not escape their just punishment; but leave all to me! I will begin by pronouncing on her a sentence she will not like."

"Jeanne, and dear daughter and friend, since thou art thus restored to us," he continued loudly, but with great and joyful tenderness of tone; "since thou hast confessed thine errors in faith and monstrous crimes, in fitting ecclesiastical form, we absolve thee from the chains of excommunication; and to give thee time and opportunity for a saving penitence, we condemn thee to perpetual imprisonment, to be fed on the bread of sorrow and the water of anguish, that thou mayst weep over what thou hast done, and never again have power to do what should be bewept! Take her back, messires, to the castle of Rouen."

Some signs of indignation, and even of tumult, were now audible among the English soldiery; and several stones cast by the populace reached the car of the victim, whose recantation had destroyed, in their opinion, all reason for favourable sentiments. But Fastolfe seemed to have reassumed with the stroke of Jeanne's pen the knightly dignity and energy of his character. He assembled a strong guard almost instantly around the car, and set it in movement with a boldness and decision that prevented or overawed resistance. In a few minutes it disappeared within the gates of the castle of Rouen, and Cauchon entered the abbey of St. Ouen with the railing cardinal,

to give an account of his failure to the wrathful and disappointed nobles and princes therein assembled.

"Thou hast not won my lady of Commercy yet, my lord the bishop," soliloquized the Canon Perrinet, as he emerged from beneath the scaffold, and retraced his way to the archiepiscopal palace. He had been ordered not to stir from its precincts, but had presumed, in as much secrecy as possible, to disobey.

"Now can I return with a joyful conscience to my fine abbey, and the miller's wife, and my lord the archbishop's good graces for ever," mused Friar Richard; and with a light heart and lighter heels he left the gates of Rouen, shaking its dangerous dust from his bare feet with supreme satisfaction.

Meanwhile, the arguments of Cauchon, and the renewed promises which he made with a fury that could leave no doubt of his zeal, in so far soothed the anger of the regent and the English chiefs, that he obtained permission to proceed in a manner indicated. He assured them so positively that no woman guilty of Jeanne's crimes could fail to relapse in them, when the punishment would become irrevocable; and represented the advantages of the intervening confession and recantation so forcibly, that some began to imagine that both he and the regent had planned it.

In pursuance of the secret purpose devised by the vengeance and disappointment of Cauchon, he proceeded at once, with a sufficient retinue of ecclesiastical witnesses, to the castle of Rouen. They were hooted and reviled by the English soldiery as they went, and, but for the strong guard assigned them by the regent, might very possibly have been personally assailed. The soldiers remembered that the judges were all Frenchmen, and suspected them of partiality in permitting the witch to evade her punishment.

Cauchon and his retinue descended into the dungeon where Jeanne was confined, and found her freed from her chains, by the kindness of her two principal jailers, and seated on her couch. A strong expression of despair was on her visage, and she scarcely looked up when the bishop and his train appeared.

"A great mercy has been done to thee to-day, Jeanne, in which we, thy judges, do most heartily of all rejoice, inasmuch as thy confession fully confirms the justice of our sentence," he said. "It now behoves thee, as a restored child of the Church, to obey her commands in all things; which, if ever again thou shalt disobey, she cannot and will not ever again interfere in thy behalf, Remember this."

"Ye are just—as men are just," said Jeanne, with a deep sigh.

"And first and specially the Church commands thee, Jeanne, to doff this shameful apparel of a man, and put on such as becomes thy sex," resumed Cauchon.

"I am willing: I will obey, whoever speaks," replied Jeanne.

"There is an old man clamouring in the castle-yard, that says he has brought her fitting clothing," said Wulfstan, deferentially.

"It is her father. We have a garment with us, but he hath one probably more suitable to her estate," replied the prelate, eagerly. "Let him be admitted. We do nothing in darkness; and wish, in-

deed, that the eyes of all mankind could penetrate into these dungeons, and see all we do."

"The sun, that sees all things, never darts his glance in here, or he would tell tales in heaven," said Jeanne, still rather vacantly; and she took, apparently, but very little notice when her father himself entered the dungeon, bearing a small sack of garments. He had apparently brought them from Domremy, for Jeanne recognized—and, despite her apathy of anguish, with a shudder—the country dress she had left in Vaucouleurs when she first dressed herself as a man, and started for Chinon.

Notwithstanding the indecency of the procedure, Cauchon and his ecclesiastical retinue insisted on witnessing the whole ceremonial of the transmutation of attire. Jeanne, however, seemed a little roused with the excess of this last degradation, or at some other reason connected with the circumstance.

"Bishop!" she exclaimed, with a sudden sparkle of rage, "thou knowest well wherefore I assumed this garb I wear! Always I slept armed when amongst my friends, unless I were with women in safe chambers. And now I am among mine enemies—with men who once professed to love me; and thou knowest how bestial is the love of men. Either let me be among women, and in a prison of the Church, or let me wear this garb still."

"The demon is still strong within her," exclaimed Cauchon. "What! was it not thou who railed at what thou calledst concubinary priests?—a long word for a peasant's mouth, but learned, no doubt, after the fashion of the mocking-birds they bring from Cathay. Thou shalt tarry here, and if thou hast any complaints to make, right shall be done thee. But thy spells, we trust, are harmless now. Not only must thou assume this garb, and in our presence, but by a solemn act must we attest it. Talk not of womanly shame and folly to us, thou camper and courtier of Charles of Valois!"

"Thy mother would not know thee in this garb; in God's name, my child, wear these," groaned old Jacob; and Jeanne resigned herself to the decree. All that the interposition of Fastolfe could obtain was that the witnesses should turn their backs for a few moments, while she stripped off her vest and under garments. She used those moments, however, with such rapidity, that when they turned she was in the long-skirted robe of a woman, and her man's garb lay in a heap in a corner.

Weeping with joy, the old man proceeded to part and comb back her hair, which had grown very long, but which she still wore round like that of a man; and concluding his task, he folded his arms around her, and exclaimed as well as he could for sobs, "And now thou art my kind and pious Jeanne again, and I revoke my curse, bidding it rather descend on mine own head. And now, holy sirs and Christian clergymen, in the name of the Jesus of mercy, give me my daughter again, and I will take her back to her village, and she shall never trouble ye any more."

"On the contrary, Jacobus, thou must bid thy daughter farewell, and never expect again to behold her," said Cauchon, in his calm,

terrible tones. "This dungeon is her only home, until it shall please a mightier Power than any of us to release her. Silence and solitude are henceforth her everlasting company."

"But do not blame thy curse, my father," said Jeanne. "It is not in these words, nor in this sentence, nor in these dungeon-walls, though I was wont to love the sun. These are the worst men's curses call on men; but mine is in my heart, in my soul's soul, for I have betrayed my king, and France, and myself to everlasting shame."

As she spoke she seemed to awake from some lethargic dream, and gazing around with eyes that flashed like those of a lioness in the toils, she continued, "Ah, false priests! vile Burgundians! ye have indeed made me like yourselves—a traitor, and in petticoats!"

"Let us be gone, she begins to blaspheme—and cast this hoary dotard out of the gates and out of Rouen," returned Cauchon.

"But at least ye cannot burn her—ye cannot burn her; I will home and tell her mother that. She will repent, too, and her soul will be saved," exclaimed Jacob d'Arc.

"Listen now in turn to me, my lord of Beauvais," said Fastolfe, in a voice thick with many contending emotions. "We may all see her there, a peasant, and in peasant weeds, degraded, lost, abandoned by all the world; yet even thus do I feel that I can love her better than all the world. She has wronged me, yet will I pardon her. She rejected the impure love I once offered her, with scorn, and I honour her for it. She is assoiled by confession and the Church's pardon of her sorceries; her glory remains to her. And for the punishment ye have decreed, what can England or ye need or demand more than assurance that she will never repeat her offences? Give her, then, to me—to Fastolfe of Pataye—as a wife, and I will take her with more pride and honour than a princess, and my love shall guard her more faithfully, keep her truer to English interests, than all the bars, and dungeons, and jailers in France."

Astonishment for some moments rendered Cauchon utterly unable to reply, and then he burst into a dissonant laugh, which echoed throughout the vaulted prison around.

"A wife, a wife! a convicted sorceress! a peasant wench of Lorraine! Why, brother, the fit was never half so strong upon thee before, and she has only abjured her witch-powers in words!" said Cauchon, continuing his bitter mirth.

"And tell me, know I this also by witchcraft, that the dishonour of a noble damsel of France is to be the reward of the good bishop of Beauvais, when he has shed the blood of Jeanne d'Are?" retorted the Maid. "Nay, I scarcely know how I learned it, but some voice like the rustling of a serpent among withered leaves, whispered it in mine ear at the scaffold. The Lady Melusine of Commercy, the niece of Archbishop Regnault, thy prisoner, Fastolfe, so madly and foolishly hates me on thy account, that to shed my blood she is willing to become the paramour of this false priest! Hear me while I tell thee that until now she is innocent. The Canon Perrinet witnessed it to me at Orleans! She loves thee—dotes on thee madly! nay, love itself is madness, and thine the maddest of all, since captive, deserted, hope-

less as I am, I rather choose to linger out existence in these black dungeons, a condemned sorceress, than to live an Englishman's bride, in a radiant palace! Therefore, let us not meet again; but if thou wouldst win forgiveness for thy share in my false betrayal to England, rescue this lady from the hands of Beauvais, and make her thy wife, who is noble like thyself, wealthy, and loving!"

"And she rejects our noble brother!—she rejects him!—This is rich matter for laughter," said Cauchon, laughing still, but with a strange clank in his mirth. "Cheer thee, fair brother! if the council approves this dulcet wedding, she shall be thine, when they restore thee thy garter, and meanwhile thou art her Maidship's keeper."

"I demand to be placed in other hands; I will not be left in this man's!" exclaimed Jeanne.

"Jeanne, do not at least dishonour me so far as to think that I would disgrace my manhood by assailing thee," said Fastolfe, in a low, shame-struck tone. "It was thy glorious soul I loved!—and since that can never be mine——"

"Her glorious soul is the entire property of Messire Charles of Valois, who seldom rests content with the spirituality merely," interrupted Cauchon.

"It is true!—I love, have loved, and must to my hour of doom still love the king, who has abandoned me to these insults," said Jeanne, melting into a torrent of tears, which relieved her heart at a moment when it was about to burst. "Priests, father, knight, ye have heard my words; but hear witness, too, that never has that love been profaned by the vile acts your pitiless malice imputes to me. I loved him in the earliest dreams of my childhood, and knew it not! I loved him when I first beheld him, and knew it not! I loved him when I fought for him—when I disobeyed him—when I braved him—when this morning I betrayed him!—and I shall love him most when I die for him! Yet God and our Lady forbid I should ever have won, or ever win, one glance, one smile, that should be the queen's!—And now go ye all in peace, for at least solitude and silence are granted me in my punishment."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE DREAM OF JEANNE D'ARC.

> "For God is also in sleep, and dreams advise,
> Which He hath sent propitious, some great good
> Presaging, since with sorrow and heart distress,
> Wearied, I fell asleep."—*Milton.*

It was a little past the midnight of that which followed the tumultuous day of Jeanne d'Arc's recantation. Very few of the entire population of Rouen were nevertheless asleep. The events of the day were alone sufficient subject-matter for an unwearied gossip, but it was somewhat incongruously mingled with anticipations of a splendid and festive

exhibition on the following morning. As if to recompense the people for the loss of the tragic show they had expected, it was announced that the young king of England would make his triumphant exit from Rouen, on his way to be crowned in Paris. The citizens might expect to be relieved of the trouble and expense of his warlike retinue, and at the same time witness a military pageant, always pleasing in French eyes.

The tone of discussions on the circumstance of the recantation of Jeanne d'Arc was universally the same in one point—in condemnation of the unfortunate heroine. The English soldiery had now the authority of her own confession to believe her a witch, and were more than ever exasperated and terrified at her escape from punishment. The people of Rouen, bred in all the superstitions of the age, however well inclined to the cause she had raised, could no longer refuse to allow that her wonderful deeds were wrought by magic arts. The horror and fear which this belief infused was even the more intense among those who had ventured to take her part,—their judgment and arguments were confuted as well as their hopes.

Persons, who had better means of forming an opinion on the real state of the case, were yet amazed and alienated by the want of courage displayed in the hour when she needed it most, by the far-famed victress of Orleans and Pataye. The most favourable criticism could only consider her as an apostate from a noble cause, a martyr who shrunk from the test of faith—suffering. Who that beheld the gorgeous building fall in ruins, and knew not by what secret undermining its props were removed, could deem it had been well built or of sound materials? The bishop of Beauvais was among the most astonished of those who witnessed the crush of a structure which he had imagined would have stood unmoved amidst an earthquake, so little did it seem founded on any earthly basis.

He and his emissaries spent the intervening hours in endeavouring to fathom the mystery, and in preparing engines to raise their plans again, which had fallen like a scaffolding affixed, with the pile they laboured to destroy. And meanwhile the subject of all these discussions and strong passions slept calmly in her dungeon.

Utter exhaustion alike of soul and body followed the dread crisis in her destiny which the Maid of Orleans seemed to have escaped so narrowly. Brave as she was by nature, the horrible idea of being consumed alive in flames had almost for the first time given Jeanne a taste of physical fear, in all its anguish. The fountains of belief and hope were either so troubled or dried up in her soul, that all the main sources of her strength had departed. Nothing remained but a woman, deserted by God and man, betrayed, ill-used, surrounded by multitudes of raging enemies, broken-hearted, despairing—and asleep!

She was asleep; but involved in so singular and diversified a maze of dream, that any one who had watched her countenance must have marvelled at the strange variety of thought therein portrayed. Now there was an expression of innocent and childish gaiety on those sorrowful and tear-blistered features; anon a wondering and passionate admiration—the divine light of love spread its beauty like a rising

star over the calm of her inward soul; this expression was succeeded by one of wildness and inquietude; then, of lofty daring and energetic resolve. The muscles of her face became convulsed, the brows knit, the lips strained against each other—with fierce workings of an intrepid and violent will; suddenly that faded away, and a more feminine but still exasperated passion seemed to hold dominion in her heart: anon, she started and heaved in her slumber, until the damp sweat started on her forehead as if in conflict with some mortal foe; shudders of pain and convulsive writhings succeeded, passed away, and the magnificence of triumph shone like a glory overy her visage. She sighed and breathed hard, and wafted her hands vacantly in the air as if mounting amidst clouds; and almost immediately an expression succeeded all these phases which would have puzzled the most acute physiognomist. An immortal sadness mingled with satisfaction dwelt like the inexplicable smile of death on her lips, while tears flowed so abundantly from her closed eyelashes that the straw of her couch was wet, as if with dew, beneath her head.

The hapless sleeper's moods indeed followed the changes of a most varied vision. At first she dreamed that she was free again, that she saw the bright sun once more, and sat, as she was wont even in her earliest childhood to do, a pleased but unsharing spectatress of the boisterous revelry with which the villagers of Domremy celebrated the festival of their tree. All the friends of her youth, or at least the accustomed faces of the old time, were around her. Her mother, with her look of simple happiness; her sire, with his severe brows awhile relaxed; her sister, merrily dancing with some village lad beneath the tree; and her brothers rollicking in all the glee of rough country mirth among the laughing girls of the hamlet, as they twisted garlands of the liberal May, and threw them among the youths to be scrambled for.

Suddenly a knight in gorgeous caparison, of a most beautiful and kingly presence, rode into the midst of the revellers; and well the beating heart of the Maid of Orleans recognized the winning smile and graceful tones of Charles VII., though he seemed to be unknown to all the rest, when he asked for one who might be willing to guide him to Vaucouleurs? Rough and churlish refusals alone replied, until Jeanne, touched as she thought with pity and shame at the rudeness of her companions, volunteered her services. She felt a vague, but most painful consciousness that there was wrong, guilt, danger, in this her proffer. Her father peremptorily ordered her not to go, her mother wept,—but still she went.

Jeanne dreamed she took the bridle of the knight's charger, and guided him over the meadows towards Vaucouleurs. But the scenery was more gloomy and wild than she could well remember it to have been. A road hardly marked from the grass by the tramp of sheep; on each side dark and melancholy swells of marsh-land, sometimes forming a broad plain to the undulation of distant hills, at others closing amidst forests and rocks and thundering waterfalls,—only the innumerable buttercups of the smiling valley of the Meuse decked the wild expanse as of old, else drear and sorrowful as the absence of

living objects always makes landscapes appear. It seemed to Jeanne as if the youthful knight in no wise partook of the character of the scene. He was full of gaiety and smiles, and often praised the black gloss of her raven hair, and the wild colour of her cheek. At times he looked in her eyes with his own sweet and sparkling gaze, and an inexpressible happiness pervaded her whole being. Never seemed the sky so blue, nor the birds to sing so sweetly as now: yet the knight spoke in no intelligible tongue; a perpetual flow of music only seemed to come from his lips, that intoxicated her soul with its amorous sweetness and vague persuasion to delight.

And yet trouble and a mystic sense of evil and impending wrath made Jeanne feel anxious to hasten on, and get her task performed as rapidly as possible; only the knight's charger insisted on grazing as it went, and it seemed so like the noble and faithful steed that had perished beneath her at Compiègne, that Jeanne could but give it its way. Thus had the knight and she long pauses amidst the flowery wastes they traversed; and ever the fascination and terror gained almost equally strength in her soul. But she thought that they passed the ruined fortress of the lords of Domremy, called the Island, and suddenly the hermit who had taken such pains to instruct her childhood in strange lore, appeared on a broken battlement, and upbraided her so keenly, that she seized the charger's bit, and urged it on at a rapid pace, much against the rider's will.

But to the sleeper's great astonishment, instead of those of Vaucouleurs, the walls of Orleans arose before her gaze. Myriads of ghastly and famished faces seemed anxiously glaring out of loopholes and battlements in expectation of her approach, and children, lean as skeletons, displayed their bare ribs, and cried and wailed, as it seemed, to hasten her on to their rescue. The cause of their distress was equally visible. A dragon, whose vast green scales appeared to be spread over the whole country, watched with his innumerable heads at all the gates of the city, and hindered any of its inhabitants from going forth in quest of food. A devouring fury instantly flamed in the heart of Jeanne d'Arc. Armed only with her shepherd's crook, she was preparing to rush on and assail the prodigious reptile, when the knight detained her with an irresistibly sweet and languid look. He bent from his steed, and drew her with a vain and yielding reluctance towards him, and in her dream the hapless Maid of Orleans repeated the delicious guilt of the kiss in Rheims, then started from the knight's embrace, appalled with the spectacle of a serpent, which yet seemed to be a woman, that raised its crest between them, and darted malicious meanings from its dazzling blue eyes like vipers. The eyes and beauteous face were those of the Lady of Beauty; and it seemed as if the serpent rest of her involved the knight and his charger in multiplied folds, and then glided off with both, as if to complete their destruction in some secret cave. Jeanne followed furiously to the rescue, even though she clearly perceived that the serpent was hastening to take refuge beneath the scaly masses of the dragon of Orleans. But suddenly that portentous monster roused itself, raised its massive heads from their couchant glare at the gates

of the city, and turned them all on Jeanne. She felt its fiery breath glow like a furnace around her, the serpent disappeared with the knight, and she was left to maintain an unassisted conflict with the tremendous power she had provoked, and with no means of defence but a feeble crook. And now behold that broke against the monster's scales, and finding conflict impossible, she essayed to take shelter amidst some rocks at hand. But she felt herself clutched by the monster's claws, torn, mangled, bleeding, hopeless, fire mingling with all her pangs, and finally left dying on a heap of burning sand. Jeanne felt as if a single drop of water would have saved her yet from death; but of all the prodigious multitude which it seemed to her should have brought rivers rather than have suffered her to perish—not one approached her.

Whether she swooned or died she knew not, but it appeared as if she woke from a trance, roused by the splendour of a torrent of light which streamed from the heavens upon her. She looked up and perceived that the skiey vault was open, and the whole space between earth and heaven filled with unnumbered angels, whose bodies seemed fashioned of light, with wings of the most exquisitely beautiful and diversified colours. The radiance seemed to absorb and draw her upwards, amidst immense sealike surges of triumphant harmony, and a fragrance of incense sweet as that of the coronation at Rheims, until she reached a point that appeared like the centre of a vast sun, within which were rings and rings of suns terminating in a dazzling speck. It then seemed to the Maid of Orleans that she was put upon some great trial and judgment, to which a tremendous Silence listened.

Two gentle female saints, whom she knew by their attributes to be St. Catherine and St. Margaret, appeared to plead her case. The warlike archangel Michael recited her deeds of arms; but some voice incessantly condemned and upraided the Maid in her own heart. She soon found that it was the voice of the queen, Marie d'Anjou, who came forward to accuse her, weeping and beseeching as she had last seen her in the castle of Loches. What she said Jeanne knew not, but she felt that she was convicted of some crime, and that a punishment was decreed. She fancied herself condemned to utter loneliness and deprived of beatitude until Charles the king should arrive in heaven. It seemed to her as if ages must elapse till then, and she found herself left solitary in the skies, in a boundless waste of purple solitude, strewed with golden fleecy clouds, which she was appointed to tend as flocks,—such as she had often seen on fine sunsets cover the fields of heaven.

She found herself reclining on a soft white cloud, near one of the gleaming azure lakes which diversified the celestial landscape, awaiting the close of a period during which she imagined the soul of her king suffered purgation of its mortal offences. An overflowing sadness mingled with an unutterable joy of expectation, was in her heart, when suddenly a dark spirit, on wings of lightning, rushed past her like a bat at eventide, and she started awake, to find indeed an exquisitely sweet odour of incense in her nostrils, and a bright light gleaming in her eyes!

She raised herself on her pallet, and shaded her dazzled sense, with rapidly returning consciousness of her real situation; and yet she perceived that indeed a supernatural visitant had entered her dungeon,—at all events, stood outside the grate of one of those subterraneous glooms that debouched in it. A figure of great beauty, clad in white robes which shone like snow in the strong light that irradiated it, winged with faint blue plumage and bearing the palm and crown of martyrdom, stood revealed to her amazed and prepared sense.

"Jeanne," said a sweet though agitated voice, "why slumberest thou when the hour and thine enemies are at hand? The cruel Dragon Knight and his base soldiery, enraged at thy chaste rejection of their love, steal hither at this hour of midnight to take a monstrous vengeance on thee—to despoil thee of thine honour by brutal violence, and then to denounce thee to the world as the harlot they have so often called thee, making France and thy king believe that thy chastity was but feigned to cozen them, thy name a scandal and reproach for ever to thy sex! The wife of Bedford, the daughter of John of Burgundy,—the wives of thine English enemies,—doubt it not, will attest thy guilt to the world!"

"Blessed Margaret! since such thou seemest, give me death rather!—a thousand, thousand times rather death?" returned the prisoner. "Or is it lawful to die by mine own deed, and I will dash out my brains against these dungeon-stones?"

"Despair is the end of the ungodly, not thine," said the comforting presence. "No, Jeanne, thou art not to perish, but to be redeemed from thy foes. Heaven is at last weary of their cruelty, and of thine unmerited suffering, or merited only by one act of too weak belief; for know, thou fortuneless one, the cordelier who visited thee, whatever he called himself, or said, to melt thy strong resolves, was the fiend disguised! The saints of France far outnumber those of England, and kneel incessantly for mercy on thee. Behold I restore to thee thine armour, which thou didst consecrate on the high altar of St. Denis. Throw off that mean garb of woman, unworthy alike of thy glory and thy deeds! Sheath thyself once more in the resplendent steel of thy victorious battles; gird on the sword, and await the entrance of thy enemies! Then invoking God, our Lady, and St. Denis, draw the sacred weapon and charge through all impediment! Thine enemies shall not resist thee; thy maiden sword shall never drink blood. The way shall be open to thee; ascend these stairs, cross the hall in which they end, enter the tower on the right, and, free and scathless, pass forth. Strong doors shall open at thy approach! warders stand motionless, or deem that some wind of night rushes past. Pause not until thou shalt find thyself in the open fields below Rouen castle, and there shalt thou find a knight's charger tied to a flowering beech-tree, and grazing tranquilly. Mount and let him carry thee whither he will; it shall be to safety,—to Bourges, where indeed thou art needed to rouse the king of France from his guilty dream in the arms of Agnes Sorel!"

"God hath not then deserted me. God and our Lady, and ye,

blessed saints, be for ever praised!" exclaimed Jeanne, casting herself prostrate before the fair vision, and bursting into a rhapsody of devotional joy and thanksgiving.

"Pray not to me, but to Him who made the treacherous waters firm footing beneath the steps of Peter!" said the angelic messenger, in a troubled voice, and disappeared.

But the light increased in brightness through the dungeon grating, though neither torch nor flame was visible that could cast its beam, and revealed to the transported eyes of the captive a complete suit of armour, laid with such order and regularity within the bars, that it seemed like a knight asleep. The Maid instantly recognized the pieces of the splendid suit given her by the king when she went to Orleans, and which she had hung over the high altar of St. Denis after the failure of the attack on Paris. A warrior's affection for his weapons and armour, associated with so many glories, was reawakened in the heart of Jeanne in all the strength of a passion. She was no longer chained, and she flew to the spot where lay the glittering heap, and still the mysterious and invisible torch poured its light to aid her. She kissed the frigid steel in the transports of her joy, bathing it at the same time in tears.

It may be imagined whether the impetuous, brave, and believing Maid of Orleans hesitated to obey the commands of one whom she thought to be an angel sent to her deliverance. The disgrace announced to her as part of the vengeful and lustful projects of her enemies, was of the kind the most abhorrent to her pure and lofty nature. Human probabilities greatly supported the angelic statement; for what revenge could better glut the hatred of her foes, or conduce to their politic purposes, than to overwhelm her and her cause with an ignominy so bitter? The passion which Fastolfe and Wulfstan of Warbois had both formerly professed, and the former had so recently and powerfully manifested; the resentment and hopelessness which her continued refusals must have provoked in so haughty a knight, and one on whom she had inflicted irreparable disgrace,—were additional reasons for belief. But in the half-frenzied excitement of her mind, the Maid weighed probabilities little—accepted all she desired as proved. To be redeemed from the universal blackness of despair cast by the revelations of Friar Richard was alone sufficient motive.

Jeanne either remembered not or heeded not the prohibition of her judges, but resumed her male and warlike garb with a reckless joy and haste. She was well accustomed, and, in general, preferred to arm herself; and by the blue radiance which seemed still to pour supernaturally from some invisible moon, she hurried on greaves, cuisses, breastplate, surcoat, and helm, girded on her sword, and putting her hand on the hilt, exclaimed, "Now, Fastolfe, I am ready!"

"Draw not the weapon till he comes, and keep your gaze fixed on the dungeon-door!" said the voice of St. Margaret; and as Jeanne turned in obedience, she had a dim thought that *two* shadows were visible on the opposite side of the dungeon, at the grating behind her.

It was but an instant; the supernatural radiance suddenly vanished, and she was left in the deep darkness of her captivity.

Full of the most tumultuous and joyful hopes of freedom and redemption, of glory and triumph, the heroic Maid longed only for the appearance of her enemies, and listened for their approach as eagerly as an ordinary woman might have dreaded it. She heard at times what she took to be the stealthy movements of the conspirators (and perhaps they were so), but her heart only quickened with the hunter's anxiety when he distinguishes the tread of his prey. The joy of life swelled full on the impetuous tide of her young blood! Once more she was to be free and glorious; she was restored to the favour of Heaven; she was to complete her great work, and redeem her native land entirely from the grasp of its conquerors; above all, she was to rescue her king from the fatal fascination of the Lady of Beauty, and make him in action the hero and conqueror which her fond fancy painted him.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE BETRAYAL.

"And yet 'tis done!
Treachery's masterpiece, the blackest, worst,
Which hath been since the kiss of Judas!"—*The Revolt of Flanders.*

TIME passed in this magnificent reverie and trance of expectation; but Jeanne d'Arc herself became at length aware that it was passing with rapidity without bringing the deliverance looked for. In that abode of perpetual darkness, she had no means of reckoning the progress of the night towards day; but finally she listened with such strained attention that for the first time, in that remote depth, she heard a clock strike: it struck three strokes; and knowing well that in that season of the year it would be daybreak in another hour, Jeanne was surprised, and with a strong admixture of anxiety listened on.

And the hours struck on in succession, until she could no longer doubt that it was even broad daylight in the world above, for a faint greyishness looked wanly in even at the bars of her dungeon. By and by she could distinguish objects, and looking sadly round for hope and encouragement to the grating where she had seen the angel, she saw that her female garments were gone, and that a singular black circle was formed round the spot where she had cast them. A vague but tremendous idea of treachery then crossed her mind, with a shadow like the shadow of death. But the goodness and integrity of her soul betrayed her then as ever. The sublime fanatic believed that the miracle of her deliverance was to be effected in the broad daylight, to render it more wonderful and impressive to her enemies.

The mind of Jeanne d'Arc was fully stored with the legends of the

Catholic Church—that mythology of triumphant suffering. The redemption of saints and other holy personages from the power of their enemies, by miraculous means, was common enough in those records. And when indeed doubts began to assail and creep over her mind, what alternative remained to her? Her female garments were gone; and if, through faintness of faith, she put off her armour, she remained at the mercy of her enemies, and doubtless abandoned by the powers in which she thereby showed her want of trust.

But even the strong hope and expectation of that great spirit sickened at last. The sounds of day prevented her any longer from distinguishing the toll of the castle-bell. The weight of her armour began to oppress her weakened frame, and she seated herself on her couch. The gleam of the water in an earthen pitcher at the bars of the door suddenly revived her. Perhaps her amorous enemies intended to make their attack at the hour when they usually brought her food, which was literally in the terms of her sentence—the bread of sorrow and water of anguish. She had not touched her previous night's ration, but she felt that the time for serving her with a fresh supply could not be far distant.

At last the welcome sounds of an approach were audible. Yes, it was the tramp of many feet. The ruthless Fastolfe and his fellow ravishers approached, for the clank of armed steps was plainly to be distinguished amidst the rustle and fall of flowing garments and slippered feet. Jeanne started from her couch, her hand was instantly on the hilt of her sword; big drops gathered on her brow! The steps came nearer—a multitudinous and yet evidently hushed movement seemed pouring down towards the grated dungeon-door. Jeanne gathered her strength like the lioness before it springs, and awaited the decisive instant. Wulfstan of Warbois appeared at the door, and peering with evidently intense anxiety in at the bars, put his massive key to the bolts. The darkness, to which his eyes were not accustomed, or some shadow, hindered him from discerning Jeanne. She heard him exclaim breathlessly, "My lords, I told ye we should find her in her form!" and he threw open the door. A throng of persons appeared; and, starting back into an attitude of attack and defiance, Jeanne attempted to draw her sword; but it broke short in her hand, and with a feeling that chilled her heart like the touch of death, she perceived that scarcely so much of the blade remained to her weapon as kept the hilt in the scabbard. Yet so awful in its inspired wrath and energy was the appearance of the famous warrioress, that those who poured in the first, among whom were her most bitter enemies and betrayers, with torches in their hands, paused in amazement when they beheld her. The bishop of Beauvais was one of these—but only for an instant. "She is caught!" he exclaimed, pointing at her with his torch, and flourishing it with a fiendish joy over her head. "Relapsa est!" exclaimed the inquisitor, Frater Johannes. "The sorceress has condemned herself!" shouted the earl of Warwick.

Jeanne glanced wildly over the throngs that now rushed before and

around her. A crowd of the priests who had condemned her, massive figures in armour with English crests on their helmets, exulting or raging in the certainty of vengeance—Fastolfe and Wulfstan gazing at her in horror and wonder;—her despair and the certainty of her betrayal were completed by hearing the voice of the false Margaret shrieking from behind. "Despair thy spells, foul witch!—Friar Richard spoke the truth, and God and man alike desert thee!"

"Soh, Jeanne! Alas, alas! see how the abominable deceits of the fiend have mocked her!—the sting is drawn from the serpent, her magic weapon is broken short!" exclaimed Cauchon. "Ah, Jeanne! like the dog to its vomit hast thou returned to thy sin! How came these arms from the custody of my lord the regent's officers? Even as the crown of Charlemagne left the gripe of the Jews of Frankfort, constrained by magic spells! What say you now, brother Fastolfe? Is your belief in her infidelities still shaken? Was it a saint or a sorceress that taught the noblest knight of England how to flee from battle? Look yonder at that fiery circle! Sprinkle us all with holy water, brother Ægidius, since you have brought so plentiful a supply, and we will speak with her!"

"Sorceress, indeed, she must be! No human thing had access to her last night, or could have brought this panoply," said the aghast dragon knight.

"It is thus ever! The fiend never wholly relinquishes his victims, do the church what she may, but returns like the gorged wolf that buries its prey for another day," said Cauchon. "Wretched woman! how hast thou dared to resume this garb of a man and of a warrior, both being forbidden thee by solemn anathema?"

"To defend mine honour against these jailers, in whose hands you have left me as a kid among wolves!" replied Jeanne, confusedly. "Hear me, noble knights! I have sworn chastity to our blessed Lady, and I did hear—I knew—it was told me—they did purpose mine everlasting ignominy, and the violation of mine oath!"

"Hear you that, Sir John Fastolfe?" yelled Cauchon. "I have heard knights and nobles say that cowardice was the mother of all vileness in man; but never heard I the most reviling of all that called thee recreant, believe or say thou wouldst take vantage so merciless of a woman, confided to thee as a prisoner, however enthralled by her spell!"

"By heaven and by hell, it is false!—and he lies who but thinks it possible!" said Fastolfe, stung to fury. "I would rather have perished than have suffered such harm to approach her! Whom dost thou accuse, Jeanne, and I will wring his heart out with mine own hands!"

"Thee and thy men-at-arms, and more of these hideous ruffians my jailers! The Voice warned me, ye did purpose to make my name a byword of laughter and mockery!" exclaimed the Maid of Orleans, bewilderedly. "Ah, ye know best whether the Voice lied or not, but ye would have made me the shame of all womankind! The duchess of Bedford, who hates me for loving him who slew her father—yet, indeed, I love him in all innocence—she, she was to certify some

ignominy, with your proud wives as witnesses,—Stafford and Warwick, and Talbot, thine!"

"By all that is in heaven and earth, the witch lies!" shouted Fastolfe.

"In very faith, she does! I would as soon kiss burning coals!" echoed the astonished Wulfstan.

"I came to see fair play between thee and thy foes, Jeanne!" said Talbot, sternly. "But this thy base accusal of the pure and stainless princess who is called duchess of Bedford, and implication of our honoured wives, proves thee so false that henceforth I abandon all ruth and mercy on thee."

"Why, dost thou think, foul slanderess, that in so brief a space we can have forgotten Sir John offered and desired to make thee,—peasant, traitress, and witch as thou art,—his lawful wife, and professed only to be enamoured of thine exalted soul?" said the cruel prelate. "What say ye, my lords? Is not your comrade hag-ridden indeed? Vile witch! hadst thou not wronged this knight enough, in depriving him of his hard-earned glories of chivalry, without adding this calumny, which degrades him below the basest churl? Tell us the truth, since thou seest thy lies are in vain; and tell us wherefore thou hast dared to put on this man's attire?"

"I never promised not. It is fitter for me to wear the garb of men among men!" replied Jeanne, with a staggered and affrighted stare, for there was in the countenance of Cauchon that look of murder which the human eye seldom beholds but once, yet recognizes at once. "Neither do ye keep your words with me, for ye promised I should receive the body of Christ, and be put out of this dungeon! Some of ye did! He who wounded me with the arrow before Paris promised it."

"Rascal! thou wert always favourable to her since she has been in thy keeping, and doubtless for good reasons," thundered the bishop. "But we will release thee the sooner of thy charge. What, woman, didst thou not abjure and promise us not to scandalize humanity again by wearing this obscene garb?"

"I prefer death to life in this dungeon, in the power of my blasphemous enemies!" said Jeanne, wildly. "But let me go to mass, and be put in a prison where there is light and air, and women with me, and I will be good and patient to the last, and do—and do whatever the Church ordains."

"That last is not far off," replied Cauchon, mockingly. "Ye may well see, messires, how fast she clings to her old illusions and heresies! Tell us, your judges, hast thou of late heard any voice of these pretended saints, and how got you this armour?"

"Yea, as I think, I have seen St. Margaret!" replied Jeanne, with so piercing a look of despairing doubt, that Cauchon himself shuddered.

"What did she want with thee, seeing thou hadst resigned thyself to the obedience of the church?" said the prelate.

"They upbraided me with the great treason I had committed against Heaven and my king, in making a false abjuration to keep so wretched a thing as life, damning my soul to save its wretched dwell-

ing of clay!" returned Jeanne, turning like her own stag, at furious bay. "And all that I have done this day, either St. Margaret bade me do it, or ye have lied a lie against Heaven! She brought me these arms! God is above all, and governs all; and if I should say that He sent me not to save France—deceive me who might in my task—falsely I should speak, and true it is He sent me! There were voices with me at the scaffold that bade my soul faint, and forced my hand to sign the recantation; but that was a fiend's; for the false preacher lied of me, and if what he said was written in the parchment ye forced me to sign, I did belie myself!"

"Then thou again obstinately believest that these voices that haunt thee were of the saints?" said Cauchon.

"Thou art a great prelate, renowned, they say, for wisdom in such matters. Tell me, then, if they were true or false ones?" returned the captive.

"The event will answer! What did they promise thee?" said the bishop.

"Liberty—redemption from my captivity and your cruel snares!"

"Why, then, they lied like the fiends they are!" exclaimed Cauchon, triumphantly; "or if they told the truth, it was after their own juggling fashion, for thou wilt soon be released, not only from thy captivity, but from the bondage of the flesh! Woman, thou hast lied to Heaven, not we! Didst thou not confess in thine abjuration that thou hadst falsely given to thy fiends the names of the saints of paradise?"

"Not so! I said they had deceived me! Alas, and they did," exclaimed Jeanne.

"Manifest heresy! Do the blessed saints and angels deceive men, or do evil spirits?" retorted Cauchon, turning to his colleagues, whose angry murmurs replied.

"Ay, they were evil spirits enow! I see it but too well!" exclaimed the betrayed captive, with frantic indignation. "But whether they were evil or good, real or pictured, such as I have said they appeared to me, and whatever I revoked or promised, I did from base fear of your tortures, and against the truth of my soul! Whoever lied, I lied not. Come to the worst at once. I am aweary of the falsehood and deceptions of men! Let me go hence to some clear realm of truth: let the world belong to those who are fit for it! I prefer to do penance, once and for all, by death, than longer to endure this evil and beset captivity!"

"For once, thou shalt have thy will, Jeanne!" replied the prelate. "My brethren, ye hear; tell me, is she relapsed or not? For my part, in all my experience, never did I behold the fiend so triumphant over mortal spirit! And I pronounce her a thousand times an obstinate and relapsed heretic and sorceress, worthy of hell-fire, or, at all events, of the best we can make her in this world! Ye hear her words—ye see her garb, which she could not have obtained but by diabolic art! Deliver your judgments! Master vicar, your utterance first, for as of right you are our guiding star."

"God forbid! I speak but for myself," said the inquisitor, faintly, and paused.

"Speak, then! What is thy judgment, priest?" shouted the earl of Stafford, with his usual fury and violence.

"What can we, but judge and repute her a heretic and relapsed idolatress?" murmured the inquisitor. "And so, by our former sentence, we must abandon her to the arm of secular justice, beseeching it to act mildly by her!"

"And what say you, brother Fécamp?" said Cauchon, with visible contempt, to the fat abbot.

"I wish to ask some questions about the crown," said the Abbot Ægidius, curiosity struggling with apprehension in his tones. "Let us not be in a hurry. It is rarely we meet with one that knows so well all about the other world!"

"I have told ye all the truth I knew, to the best of my knowledge, in the trial! Trouble me no more," said Jeanne, with the lassitude of despair.

"Then I am of opinion that we must declare her a heretic and relapsed!" replied the disappointed thaumaturgist.

"And what say you, Master Perrinet? We can no longer, as you see, afford to leave your learning unemployed!" said the prelate, with a tremendous glance at the canon.

"We must surrender her instantly, as a relapsed, impenitent, pertinacious, and, from her present demeanour, always heretic sorceress!" replied the affrighted canon.

"Even in Orleans?" said Cauchon, with a dread smile. "It is well—it is well! what says the learned Doctor Beaupère?"

"Heretica et relapsa est, nisi hic faceret ad præservationem violentiæ inferendæ?" replied the learned doctor.

"Latin which Horace would have smacked the lips at!" said Cauchon, scoffingly. "But tell us your sentence, Beaupère, in such vernacular as we may all understand!"

Beaupère tremblingly took the hint, and instantly pronounced the desired judgment.

"Methinks, ye may all as well speak at once, for the soldiers grow impatient, and there seems to be no division of opinion!" said Cauchon.

"Yet it should first be seen," observed Thomas de Courcelles, with timid hesitation, "whether she thoroughly understood the meaning of the abjuration?"

"What! would you have us begin the whole trial again?" replied Cauchon, with a violence that was amply echoed by the earl of Warwick.

"If he says so, he deserves to be thrown into the Seine, and all who think the like!" said that commander. "When is our siege of Compiègne to prosper, and how long will ye detain the king from his coronation in Rouen, with this peevish cardinal to lord it over us?"

"Is Compiègne still besieged? I thank ye at least for these news! It is the breastplate of the north!" exclaimed Jeanne, suddenly roused to attention, for hitherto she had listened passively as if the dialogue concerned some other person.

"Thrown into the Seine, my lord of Warwick!" said De Courcelles, anxious to take an opportunity to withdraw from the guilty work. "The freedom of judgment is violated by your threats, and I withdraw from it with protest."

"Hark thee, bald skull!" shouted Stafford. "Tarry, and in all freedom, or I will make a signal to some without, who shall so mix thy brains with thy theology, that thou wilt be puzzled indeed to decide in thy next cause!"

"Come, sirs, let us hasten!" said Cauchon, imperiously. "The king's foot is in the stirrup ready to depart, and it were great presumption to retard him a moment we can avoid, and on so worthless a business! Decide at once: it shall be no less for our own safety than the state's, for I myself, as I came, was nigh torn to pieces by the angry soldiers!"

The effect of these menaces and cajolery was audible in the now universal words, "Relapsa est et relinquenda in manibus justitiæ sæcularis!" Relapsed and abandoned to secular justice!

"All that remains to be done, then," said Cauchon, and not without some slight wavering of tone, "is to order her to be taken for execution before the bailiff of Rouen, in the abbey church of St. Ouen, and meanwhile charitably to admonish her to use the brief time that will yet be given her in the care of her soul, for nothing temporal henceforth touches her!"

"Yes, Jeanne, you are to be burned alive—and for your ingratitude, I trust, as much as anything," said the canon Perrinet, with extreme bitterness.

"Peace, brother, and leave her to her devotions," said Cauchon, mildly. "Friar Martin Ladvenu shall confess her; he is young and innocent, and will not be corrupted by the abominations she will pour into his mind! The church grants thee this last grace, Jeanne, and abandons thee for ever! In nomine Domini. Amen."

Until this instant Jeanne had scarcely comprehended, much less believed in, the full perfidy and cruelty of her enemies. The truth now burst upon her with the terrible illumination poured by some glare of destruction, and her heroic nature yielded to the overwhelming horror of her doom.

"My God! my God! and do ye treat me thus?" she exclaimed, wringing her hands. "Do ye give my flesh to be consumed to ashes, which, He is my witness, was never yet contaminate! Of your mercy, I beseech ye a thousand times rather let me be beheaded! Alas! if I had been in a prison of the church, and not guarded by my mortal enemies, I should not have so miserably mischanced as I have. Oh! I appeal before God, the Judge of judges, from the great wrongs and cruelties ye exercise on me!"

"Jeanne, you have always told us your voices said you should be delivered from our hands," said Cauchon. "Tell us, now, whether they lied or not? Tell us whether they were evil spirits or not?"

"Bishop, I die by thy means," exclaimed Jeanne, when the prelate scoffingly interrupted her.

"Take patience, Jeanne," he said; "you die because you have not kept your word, and have returned to your former crimes."

"Traitor! I die by thy treachery, by thy cruelty!" said Jeanne, with wild vehemence. "And therefore I summon thee to answer my plaint before God; and think not the flames shall drink my blood so utterly but that its red fumes shall mount to heaven and drag down justice on thy head!"

"Hold your tongue, in the devil's name, since that is your master!" said the bishop, with the ferocious roar of a wild beast. "If you are a saint, Heaven will deliver you at the stake, for thither you go within the hour! Make haste, brother, for the people, too, are impatient. I will send you the sacrament in all diligence. And you, her keepers, to show how little I believe in her accusations, I command you to remove her magic arms, and put on her the man's garb she discarded yesterday, since that brought her by her doting sire she has made a present to the fiend. She is to be burned not baked!"

"My lord bishop, you have yet something to say," observed the earl of Warwick, in a low tone.

"Ay, ay," replied Cauchon, returning. "I trust, brother Martin, thou wilt bring her to such a frame of mind that, for the sake of rooting out the pestilent errors she has sown, she will publicly confess she was deceived, and has deceived all who believed in her, and will ask pardon of the people for misleading them with her wicked example."

"Yes, I will do so!" exclaimed Jeanne, with all the energy of her daring character. "I will ask pardon of the English and Burgundians for teaching the French how to overthrow them in battle; of the people, for delivering them from their yoke! Friar, remind me of this in my hour of doom: I will not fail to keep my plight!"

"Let us away," said Cauchon, with affected indignation, adding as he ascended the steps of the dungeon, "Good, my noble lords of England, now may ye rejoice and make good cheer, for she is nigh her end—what is your English word?—nigh her everlasting Farewell!—her game is played out."

CHAPTER XL.

THE TEMPESTUOUS SUNSET.

"In rainbow circles up to Heaven arise
Legions of glorious ghosts who wave to me!
Heroes of freedom! yea, your fate be mine!
Wave on, I come; and ye who follow us,
Despair not, though unnumber'd battle-fields
Roll with the blood of freemen; though the rocks
That curb the sea, by tyrants be exhaust
To fashion dungeons; though their scaffolds' planks
Wear out the everlasting growth of nature!
Courage and courage: still shall earth be free."

The Revolt of Flanders.

THE noble courage and indignation which had flamed up in the heart of Jeanne died away in her bosom, in the dreadful silence that followed the departure of her judges. She found herself left alone with her jailers and a very young Dominican friar, who was appointed her confessor, but looked as much afraid of his penitent as if she had been some savage beast.

"Take off your armour, sorceress, or we must despoil thee by force!" said the now relentless tones of Sir John Fastolfe.

"It shall not need," replied Jeanne, with a start of horror. "But I believe in the fiendish saint no longer, and misdoubt not your faith; nor will the flames leave my body in your cruel custody. Depart a few instants, and I will obey."

Fastolfe and his assistants complied, and in a very brief time Jeanne called to the Friar to return. She then appeared dressed in the mourning-suit of men's clothes she had worn on entering Rouen, seated on her couch, gazing with a ghastly fixedness of look at her armour. Wulfstan entered, seized up the pieces, and withdrew with what he meant to be a glance of extreme indignation at his false accuser, but which suddenly became blinded with tears.

"Alas, this is my first confession—and such a one!" exclaimed the young Dominican, alarmed at finding himself alone with his dread penitent.

"'Tis not so black a one as you deem, good father," said Jeanne, calmly. She had become an impersonation of that despair which is a tranquillity of the mind as mortification is of the body.

Yet one frightful thought seemed to reign amidst the confusion of her ideas, and was diffused through the whole confession she now uttered to the wondering friar. She imagined she was deserted by

Heaven, and given up to the dreadful doom that awaited her, for her guilt in loving Charles VII.! Certainly it had been the cause of her destruction, for if she had not loved him, nothing human could have induced her to continue her career to the fatal walls of Paris.

But when the Dominican, who expected the most horrible revelations of sorcery and magic, found that nothing of the sort was offered; when he heard only a detail of the most glorious exploits, and beheld at his feet, about to perish by a horrible punishment, a woman who deserved the greatest rewards which a nation could bestow he felt the amazement which the stupefaction of sorrow hindered her from any longer feeling. At the same time he feared that his penitent deceived herself, and still entertained hopes from an obstinate concealment of the truth. He urged upon her the hopelessness of such a course with tremulous lips, for he felt that he had scarcely courage left to sustain the horrible facts he expected to be obliged to hear; and for a while Jeanne d'Arc forgot the terror of her situation in endeavours to prevail on the Dominican to believe in her innocence of the supernatural offences laid to her charge. But she was painfully recalled to the consideration. A priest entered with a cup containing the sacrament, but brought it uncovered, without taper or ceremonial, as if to a creature altogether unworthy of sharing the rites of religion.

It was the canon Perrinet, who brought an imperious message, not in the least softened by his tone, that the judges were all assembled in the churchyard of St. Ouen, and desired not to be kept waiting for the criminal.

Jeanne rose from her knees with a deadly flush on her pale features, and Friar Martin himself looked scandalized at the indecent manner in which the Host was brought.

"It is good enough for her, and too good," replied the indignant canon; "and, such as it is, you are ordered not to give it to her unless she acknowledges her sins and demands it."

"I do, I do," said Jeanne, kneeling again. "Ah, sweet Lord Jesu! Thou alone canst deliver me, and didst Thyself suffer so bitterly that Thou wilt take compassion on me, a woman and shamefully betrayed!"

"Dost thou believe any longer in these fiends which thou callest voices?" said the trembling Dominican.

"I believe in God only. May that suffice?" replied Jeanne; and the young Dominican, anxious to be rid of his task, hastily murmured an absolution, and handed her the chalice, the canon mockingly observing, "Help yourself if you can!"

The terrific reality of her fate was at the same instant thrust visually upon the unhappy prisoner. A strong guard of axemen and spearmen entered her dungeon, under command of Fastolfe and Wulfstan of Warbois. The few remaining preparations were completed, and she was hurried out of the castle.

Her appearance as she emerged from the gates of this dark pile—according to the testimony of bystanders—was so weeping, woe-

begone, and barbarously maltreated, that her enemies, who were ready to greet her with insulting shouts of triumph—the populace, who intended to overwhelm her with scorn and contumely—all were silent! Still the last mighty moral pang was given to the breaking heart of the deliverer of France when she perceived how many of the people of Rouen had brought kindled torches to add to her funeral pyre.

On this final occasion she was led into the square of St. Ouen on foot. Almost the same mass of spectators were assembled as on the previous one, save that the churchyard of the abbey was chiefly occupied by the young king of England, and a great retinue, on horseback. They were magnificently arrayed, as became the nature of the triumphal coronation-progress Henry VI. was to take to Paris. Among other displays, two heralds bore as many crowns before the king, on cushions of cloth of gold, distinguished by the different ornaments appropriate to those of France and England.

It was a dark and lowering day; it seemed as if the very skies took part against Jeanne d'Arc. From the earliest hour the news was spread throughout Rouen, that she had relapsed, and was detected practising some dreadful act of witchcraft; and the superstitious masses ascribed the gloom of the day to her spells, or to the indignation of Heaven at the delay in her punishment. What she had done was unknown, but therefore excited the more terrible expectation to learn.

Still the unimaginable anguish in the looks of the fallen heroine affected the hardest—perhaps even Cauchon. There was something wild and strained in the gaiety and satisfaction of some words he addressed to Cardinal Beaufort, as the train approached the raised scaffolding on which they both stood. "If England only keeps her word as I have kept mine, I am archbishop of Rouen now!" he exclaimed. The cardinal gave a stern and not altogether pleasing smile and nod.

According to custom, Jeanne d'Arc was led up the scaffolding that she might be solemnly relinquished by her judges to her doom. But the most determined and exasperated of them all shrunk back appalled from the supernatural sorrow and reproach in her looks. It was the living hell of many to remember that glance of mute appeal to an hour of their own existences when it arose before them like a summons to judgment.

But the Maid of Orleans strove, and with success, to regain her composure when she beheld the immense mass of the people all gazing fixedly on her alone. It dimly occurred to her, that her demeanour in this dread hour must stamp her either a martyr or a criminal. Her dress was put on in a disordered manner, and with a natural modesty she drew the cloak around her, bent thrice to the multitude, while thrice a solemn and dubious murmur arose, and then she complied with the imperious gesture of Cauchon, by vaulting on a high three-legged stool prepared for her, as lightly and deftly as if upon the back of her charger.

Here she sate exposed to the universal gaze of the people, and a confused mutter of commentary arose all around, far and near. She folded her arms on her breast, and gazed over the multitude, and then turned her eyes upward with a bewildered glare to the sky,—with what thoughts, with what anguish, who but He that gives to the soul of genius its illimitable powers of joy and suffering can tell? But she became, to all appearance, calm, and listened with an expression of profound and melancholy resignation to the exhortation which was again delivered against her by a preacher chosen for the purpose.

It was no longer Guillaume Erard, that pronounced the harangue. He was found too long-breathed to suit the eagerness of vengeance. It was one Nicole Midi, the assessor of the inquisitional court that had condemned her. He took for his text the words,—"If any limb is hurt, the whole body suffers."

The curiosity of the people was vehemently excited to learn what was the specific act of sorcery in which Jeanne d'Arc had been detected. But only a very general information was communicated, that she had been caught exercising her magic art; the rest of the harangue consisted of violent abuse and invective, prophecies of the worse doom awaiting her in the world wherein she was about to pass, and declarations of the justice of the one to be inflicted upon her on earth. Jeanne listened throughout without any sign of anger or impatience, tears continuing to flow silently and unregardedly down her smirched and pallid cheeks. Perhaps her thoughts were busied elsewhere, amidst remote scenes and events of her wondrous existence, for she gave a start like one awaking from a dream when the droning voice of the preacher ceased and the dark tones of the bishop of Beauvais succeeded.

Cauchon had strung himself by every effort of pride and resolution to complete his cruel task unwaveringly, and the muscles and veins of his lean visage were raised and set like those of a horse straining to pass the goal. He looked dreadful as his deed, all the while that he pronounced the sentence which made him and his accomplices murderers, in the name of God and of the church. His harangue included a long recapitulation of the supposed crimes of the condemned, as if the speaker strove to harden and convince his own conscience; but his voice thickened and became incoherent as he concluded with the usual deceitful and cruel formula, "Jeanne, go in peace! The church can no longer defend thee, and yields thee to the secular arm, beseeching it to be mild and merciful to thee!"

"Ye have condemned me to earthly flames, and yourselves to everlasting ones," said Jeanne, in a low dizzy tone; "but I have done that I had to do on earth, and am ripe for death. I would not have given such a doom to the vilest thing that lives! Often when the camp-fires blazed, and I was wearied, I have risen from my couch to drive the bats from the flames,—it is so painful a death! But ye, God forgive ye, England herself will hate your memories for this deed;

and for France—oh, France!"—And her voice became suffocated with the indignant grief that swelled in her great heart.

"Ha, France!" exclaimed the preacher Midi, "how art thou abused that wert always so Christian a land! And Charles, that calls himself thy king and governor, has adhered, like a heretic and schismatic as he is, to the words and deeds of a worthless woman, defamed, and full of every dishonour; and not he only, but all the clergy under his obedience and lordship, by whom she was examined and not forbidden, as she says. Ha, Charles! heretic and consorter with sorceresses and demon-worshippers! dost thou hope to enjoy the most Christian crown of France? Deny it if thou canst, Jeanne, for I speak to thee, or rather confess that thy false king is a heretic and schismatic, unfit to live, much more to reign over this good people of France?"

"He is no false king—he was crowned in Rheims!" returned the Maid, her heroic spirit rekindling from its ashes. "By my faith, friar, saving your reverence, I dare well say, and swear it too—I that am about to perish—that my king is the noblest of all Christians, and who best loves the faith and the church. And he is not what you call him, but a noble knight, beautiful, kingly, most royal in all actions wherein he is not misgoverned; and that France shall some day know and believe, when she has truly placed her sword and sceptre in his hand, to sway freely—which she shall: yea, that rebellious Paris herself—Paris, whose stony breast dashed her true children back that would have rushed into it in all love—Paris shall be the loudest to say so."

"Peace! peace! Paris will be anything and everything, doubtless, by turns," interrupted Cauchon. "Peace! or let her be gagged."

"Ay! ye may silence me, but ye cannot silence the voice of time," exclaimed Jeanne, with eyes that flashed inspiration amidst their despair and tears. "England herself, I tell ye, shall yet lament me—her women some day shall weep over my story; and though now I set in stormy clouds, ye cannot hide the glory of my day. Yea, where yonder stake is now piled, my statue shall be raised; and ages, that spare not the monuments of kings, shall pass mine in reverence."

"Bailiff, send her to judgment! it is your duty!" said the prelate, furiously rising.

The bailiff of Rouen, who was close at hand with his officers, essayed to speak but could not.

"Give me a few instants for prayer," said Jeanne, and kneeling on the scaffold, she clasped her hands, and wrung them with bitter anguish towards the people. "Ah, Rouen, Rouen! much I fear the judgment of innocent blood will fall upon thee, but from this my dying word may perchance save thee. Whenever France wins thee, I bid it spare thee; and, my God, still love and cherish and give the victory to my king and to France, for the just cause is thine, and it is just that every people should inherit its own; and hear me, France,—oh, that my voice were in all thy winds, on the murmur of all thy

streams—deem what thou wilt of me and of my deeds, but impute none of the blame and all of the glory to Him; and, my God, grant that this dread chastisement may win the pardon of the sin wherein I perish and must—despite this cruelty and abandonment—which God forgive him and all France, and ye, mine enemies!"

But the overwhelming recollections rushing upon her with the words, once more subdued the woman's heart that had beaten most womanly in her bosom beneath the cuirass of battle, and the Maid yielded to a passion of tears and lamentations which affected even the iron cardinal. A woman and so mercilessly betrayed, so glorious and so fallen, given to so horrible a doom, moved Beaufort himself to tears, while the honest ex-verdurer, covering his face with his gauntlets, wept aloud. The canon Perrinet muttered within his teeth, "Peter, indeed thou art a rock!" A dead silence pervaded both soldiers and people: the only human thing present that preserved an unshaken ferocity was the brutish earl of Stafford. "Make haste, priests; will ye keep us here to dinner?" he exclaimed.

"We yield her into your hands; she has wandered beyond the tinkle of the bell to recall her," said the bishop, rising, and his slavish colleagues mechanically imitated him. "Go, Jeanne, and God pardon thy manifold crimes, for we cannot. Bailiff, we surrender her to justice!" he then turned his back, and the rest of the judges did the same. This was the signal of renunciation, and the bailiff of Rouen, turning very pale, and without articulating a word, made a signal to the executioner.

Loupgarou advanced, and Jeanne d'Arc gazed with dreamy horror at his hideous face, while the seasoned official himself seemed dismayed at his task. He extended his hand to his victim, but she shrunk away, and some soldiers, in obedience to a remote signal, rushed forward, seized, and dragged her roughly down the scaffold. Jeanne endeavoured in vain to be released from their hard, griping grasps, by weeping assurances that she would go without resistance; and she was hurled on, she scarcely knew how, until suddenly she found herself passing through the noble squadron that surrounded Henry VI. A thought flashed through her brain.

"Let me breathe for an instant," she exclaimed. "It was told me that I should be freed when I saw the king of England: is this he?"

"Let her halt, ye have nigh dragged her to pieces," said Wulfstan, fiercely interposing, and procuring the desired pause. The Maid was now nearly opposite the person of the boy-king from whom she had torn so mighty a realm; and in all the despair and horror of her position she remembered that it was in his name France was ravaged, and the prayer for mercy she had perhaps intended to utter, spoke only in her wild and supplicating looks, her streaming eyes, and outstretched hands.

"Keep her off, uncle! or she will bewitch me too!" said the child, shrinking back from her in horror.

"Delivered!—ay, by death, thou accursed limb of Satan, and so

shall we be all of thy mischief-working presence!" said the exasperated Regent. "Where be thy prophecies now? Didst thou not say thou wouldst drive us out of France?"

"My memory shall!" replied Jeanne, passionately, and the spirit of prophecy seemed to come over her as she continued gazing at the crowned child. "Ah, I pity thee, I that go to the fiery stake—thee, that goest to receive a second crown in Paris! One alone were too heavy and would crush those temples, poor boy! Wert thou meant by nature to be a king, thou wouldst not suffer me, thine enemy and in thy power, to be dragged to this unjust doom! No, thou wert not made to rule over these ferocious godams!—Thou art the last of thy race, and, I know not why, but the innocent roses thou wearest on thy breast seem to me dyed crimson in gore." She pointed, as she spoke, to a nosegay of white roses which the youthful sovereign wore.

"Take the witch away, uncle, she withers me with her eyes!" exclaimed Henry.

"On with her, to the stake! and burn her well and quickly, good rogue, if thou wouldst earn a luckpenny to thy wage!" said the duke of Bedford, and the executioner seemed to regain courage. He clutched his prey with a species of rage by the collar of her doublet, and dragged her on until they reached the fatal circle of the stake. This was kept by a gleaming and many times inserted ring of axemen and archers, through whose thick ranks only the victim, the executioner, Fastolfe, and Wulfstan of Warbois, were suffered to penetrate.

There was a frightful pause when the group entered the broad circular space thus kept around the stake and its piles of faggots and pitchy sawdust. Jeanne looked upward with horror at the extraordinary height of the stake, and perceived with a ghastly smile that it was formed of a green beech-tree, whose flowering boughs were still suffered to remain on the top. It was fastened at the base by rings and stakes of iron to the stone pavement, which was elevated into a little mound, for the purposes of such executions. At the unusual height of a lance, two massive rivets marked where the feet of the condemned were to rest, and seemed to threaten her with a lingering death of inexpressible agony, being elevated so far above the fire to be kindled.

The executioner himself found fault with this arrangement. "It will broil her rather than burn her; she will burst and boil till it will be a pity for Christian eyes to look at her!" he muttered.

"Why pause ye, knave?" shouted a voice from the scaffolding of the judges, and Cauchon appeared overhanging the rails with a countenance fiendish with impatience and horror. "It must be so, that the people may see her perish, or we shall have false Maids as plentiful as vipers beneath our feet!"

"Never until now have I seen such cruelty, since I began my trade by striking off the head of my master Capeluche!" muttered Loupgarou. "How shall we even get her up to be chained, since

there is no ladder? we always have one at Paris for people to mount by, and then we take it away, and they come down as they best can."

He then began piling the faggots in the fashion of a flight of steps, altering and re-arranging them during several minutes. Meanwhile Jeanne remained motionless between her mute custodians, sometimes glaring upward with a fearfully enlarged eye, as if she still clung to the hope of aid from Heaven, and had abandoned all on earth. "The sun himself shines blackly to-day!" she murmured, as Loupgarou, having completed his preparations, approached and offered his hand. "Ah, merciful Jesu! it is plain that my time is come! would to God I had perished on some of the fields of my glory, or at the coronation of Rheims, at the moment they put the crown on *thy* head, when indeed my heart nigh burst with joy! Pray for me, ye that are Christians, though mine enemies, for I fear my God hath deserted me! Hath no one here a cross for me to kiss? I prayed my confessor to get one, but he too has deserted me!"

"He has gone to beg one of the abbey," said the deep, horror-struck tones of Sir John Fastolfe.

"He will come too late! you see they want me," said Jeanne, with a shuddering glance at the executioner.

"Here is my cross, poor soul, though my mother bade me give it only to her who should be my wife!" said Wulfstan, taking a rude wooden carving from his belt, which he handed to Jeanne d'Arc: she snatched it eagerly, kissed it with wild devotion, and put it in her bosom. "The flames will hurt me most there—but this will comfort me!" she murmured, and gazing intently from Fastolfe to Wulfstan, she exclaimed brokenly, "I see ye pity me—my faith, I fear I wronged ye; but it was yonder traitorous priest. Fastolfe, if indeed my doom anything touches thee, swear that thou wilt redeem the lady of Commercy from his wicked grasp; she is still innocent, still may be saved: and if in aught she aided in my doom, Heaven pardon ye both only at the altar when ye kneel to be made one."

Fastolfe stood rigidly as a statue, and made no manner of reply.

"But—but, canst thou forgive me, Jeanne, for yielding thee that wert my prisoner, to this fiendish doom which I fear thou dost not merit as I once thought, so Christianly speaking!" sobbed Wulfstan.

"Yea, good soldier! I should have believed better in thine honest face! I forgive thee—but with this condition," said Jeanne, and a mournful hope shed a last irradiation over her face; "swear to me that thou wilt take a handful of my ashes to Charles of France! tell him thou camest with the safeguard of my dying prayer, and he will reward the good deed, and it will remind him——no matter! wilt thou do it?"

"By Heaven, and all true faith, I will, though my reward be death and torture!" replied Wulfstan; and her courage seemed to revive.

"Tell him all the manner of my death! bid him remember the journey to Rheims; and sometimes when the skies are beautiful and

sad at eventide, let him look upward and remember me!" continued the hapless Maid of Orleans, resigning her hand to the executioner's grasp. "Ah, it was not by such a one as thou art, nor to such an elevation, was I led that day we crowned Charles in Rheims!"

A horrible contrast was thrust by memory upon Jeanne, of the moment when the graceful and beautiful king had escorted her to the banquet in Rheims, even as she proceeded towards the funeral pile, with a natural shrinking from every movement that brought her to it. The pity of her destiny finally overcame even herself, and a convulsion of grief and terror nigh rove her heart as she stumbled up the rude stairs of fagots to the stake. Loupgarou then turned her with her heels on the rivets of the fatal tree, and forced himself up the stake with his knees to fasten her by a chain round the waist. Luckily, at this moment Jeanne's confessor arrived with a crucifix, which he had obtained with some difficulty from a neighbouring church (St. Ouen denied one), and attracted her attention by beginning to chant the litany for the dying. She continued eagerly repeating the response to that sorrowful and beautiful form of prayer, "Merciful Jesus, have mercy on me!" until the executioner had completed his task, by fastening her waist and ankles by strong chains to the tree. Her hands were then secured by ropes behind it, and Loupgarou descended, leaving her, as he said, "Properly trussed for roasting!"

But even the executioner was dismayed and horrified, when, reaching the ground, he perceived at what a great height his victim was suspended. "It is not my fault, but they will blame me all the same!" he muttered pantingly. "Perhaps at the very best flames will not burn her, as she is so much accustomed to them! She will make a mockery of us all—and what will become of my reputation? Capeluche's envious saying at the block will be believed at last, that I should never make an executioner, forsooth!—Do not look down upon us, criminal! or the flames will affright you into struggling, and you are not so well fastened as I could desire!"

"Do thy duty, and make no delay; thou torturest me worse than the flames!" replied the hapless girl of Domremy. "I do not look upon thee now! Ah, God be thanked, my father is not here, but on his way with good news to my mother, who little wots what early mast is on the beech-tree now! Jesu! how have I deserved this? That kiss, with all its guilty happiness, was it then an adultery of the soul? Ah, our dear Lady! grant me some sign, that I may not perish in despair! For the love of mercy, good father, raise the cross to me! Let me gaze on my God, who died in tortures too!"

The trembling Dominican essayed to raise the crucifix, so that the victim might behold it. But so wild an uproar arose among the soldiery and populace at what they deemed a profanation, that the priest timidly let it fall. Wulfstan instantly snatched it up, and finding that he could not otherwise raise it to her, he fastened the cross to his spear, and held it up to her lips; she kissed it with passionate devotion,—and at the same instant the executioner applied a torch to the mass of combustibles prepared to fire the pile. The general atten-

tion was then completely absorbed in watching the first effect of the flame on the victim. So deep a stillness prevailed over the immense multitude, that a pin might literally have been heard to drop.

Running round the pile, and thrusting in his torch at certain intervals, in about a moment a great mass of fire was kindled. The compassionate Wulfstan, in hopes of diverting the attention of the sufferer, continued to hold the cross to her lips, till his own greaves became hot in the flames, and he was obliged to retire. It was then that the wretched girl, for the first time, looked down, and perceived the rising pyramids of flame! Its first fierce lapping reached her naked feet, and a dreadful shriek pealed to the very heavens from her heart, and she was seen to struggle violently with her chain and fetters. A prodigious cloud of black smoke curled up around her instantly, but her shrieks continued audible, mingled with frantic ejaculations. "My king, my king!—rescue, France!—Jesu, have mercy!—Ha, Orleans, Orleans!—left I you thus to perish?"

"Slave! aid me to pile up the flames to her, or I will brain thee where thou standest!" shouted Wulfstan to the executioner; and regardless of his own personal danger, he rushed amidst the flaming fagots, stove in the casks of tar with his mace-like fists, and heaped the fire aloft, in the hope of more speedily accomplishing the release of Jeanne from her agony.

The flames ascended in a vast raging column, and Jeanne reappeared for a moment like a red-hot figure of stone amidst them. But Wulfstan had at least the dreadful satisfaction of knowing that she appreciated the kindness of exertions which seemed to exhibit so much of a contrary feeling. "Heap on, heap on! make ashes of me! and forget not!" he plainly heard her say.

By this time the flames had formed a furious furnace in which it was impossible any longer to remain without sharing the victim's fate. The progress of the horrible work was only known for a while by the groans and lamentations within the columns of black smoke which rushed one after the other to the gloomy skies.

But the dreadful curiosity of the multitude was destined to be partly gratified and partly more vehemently excited. A sudden gust of wind dispersed the pitchy clouds around the sufferer in scattered demon-like groups, and revealed what remained of her, all enveloped in flames, excepting her head. And none that beheld it ever forgot the expression on the countenance! Mortal agony in its direst excess was there, but something that triumphed over death and suffering, a resplendent light, was on her brow and in her upward-fixed eyes! Perhaps in this moment of supreme suffering, Heaven granted to that pure, heroic, and most glorious woman some beatific sign that consoled her in perishing, and eternally baffled the ingratitude, injustice, and cruelty of mankind!

The cloud of darkness again enveloped her, and Wulfstan continued to heap the flames with unremitting zeal, crying and sobbing all the time so loudly that he was heard over the whole square. The stake itself at last caught fire, though of green wood; it was heard hissing

and crackling within the blaze; and finally, to the inexpressible joy of Wulfstan and even of the satiated spectators, it disappeared with its dark bulk from the mass of flames. The sufferings of the Maid of Orleans were therefore certainly over.

Fastolfe stood gazing in a mute and horrible ecstasy on the verge of the ring of guards, insensible to everything but the dread spectacle before him. Suddenly a horseman stood by his side, and a salutation, to which he had been for some time unaccustomed, sounded in his ears. "Sir John Fastolfe!" said the regent-duke of Bedford; "the sorceress and her spells are gone for ever!—and the king commands me to restore to you your knighthood, and these glorious badges of the garter which you only lost through her magic arts!"

A number of the knights of the great order to which he had belonged crowded around Fastolfe with their congratulations.

"Yea!" said he, mechanically taking the glittering insignia from the regent; "yea, she is gone—and her soul is with God! I saw it rise like a white dove from the flames, and speed up to Heaven!"

"And in very truth, I saw the name of JHESUS written amidst the flames as she expired!" ejaculated the young Dominican.

"Ye are bewildered!" said the regent, in a low tone. "Let not men hear ye rave! In truth, it was a piteous sight, but we must not lose our lord his kingdom for pity's sake! Let her ashes be gathered and thrown into the Seine! Sir Wulfstan, let this charge be thine; I saw thee busy enough in making her what we see her now, a cinder-heap!"

"I will take some of the whitest ashes, they must be hers!" muttered the ex-verdurer, who was now groping among the extinguished pile. "Hereabout her heart must have shrivelled away and fallen, and I will take some of that to Charles, for certes she loved her king!"

"What doth the knave now, putting that dust in his helmet?" said Bedford, considerably surprised.

"Oh, our Lady! here is her heart, whole and entire, and still full of her holy blood!" said Wulfstan, raising something from the ashes, which, burnt and burst as it was, was evidently the woful and valiant centre of anguish he had named. "And here is a coin burned into it! Alackaday, with the face of that false French dauphin on it!"

It was, in truth, the coin of Charles VII. which the unfortunate Maid of Orleans had worn from her earliest childhood in her bosom.

"Throw it all into the Seine!" said the regent, turning horror-stricken away.

"Nay, my lord! he promised to bear some relic of her to the French court, and let him, that they may not feign to disbelieve in their own measureless ingratitude!" said Fastolfe.

"It were a politic, but a dangerous office," replied Bedford. "Let him go an he dares; and, Fastolfe, as a sign of thy king's restored favour, I invite thee instantly to leave this city, and accompany us to the coronation in Paris!"

"Then let another be with us, and, as she dyingly enjoined me, let me rescue from the polluted custody of Cauchon the Lady of Com-

mercy, my prisoner more than his!" exclaimed the restored Dragon Knight.

"So be it; make good speed, and I will keep him employed in benedictions and compliments until ye have her safely outside the gates!" replied Bedford, with a bitter smile. "I love him little, and it were a master-stroke of policy to win so great a lordship as that of Commercy to our cause."

Thus, and by this cruel doom, departed the great spirit of the Maid of Orleans for those realms where only all that was divine and sorrowful in her generosity and self-abandonment, in her unrewarded love, in her resignation, piety, courage, glory, triumph, despair, and woful death, could be appreciated or rewarded; leaving, as she had prophesied, an eternal remorse in the heart of the nation that sacrificed her in the delirium of its furious fears!

But her chief murderer did not find the tranquillity he had hoped in the final destruction of his victim. However haughtily concealed, the tortures of the damned were in the heart of Cauchon during the consummation of the black tragedy; and when the regent Bedford came to him and requested him to chant a Te Deum with all his clergy round the extinguished ashes of the victim, he had scarcely power to signify his compliance. Nevertheless the rite was performed with suitable pomp, Cardinal Beaufort leading the choir with his imperious tones, as if rather upbraiding than returning thanks to the heavens. It is very possible, says the minstreless Huéline, that the sounds of this sanguinary chant ascended with the sorrowing spirit of the Maid of Orleans until it was lost in the harmonious thunders of a celestial Te Deum which welcomed the warlike saint to the abodes of the blest!

The regent purposely protracted time by ordering that an authentic act of the execution should be immediately put on record in the abbey of St. Ouen, and sent after him, leaving two of his knights to receive it. He then departed from Rouen with his royal nephew, in great state and pomp; and it was thus some time ere the impatient and soul-harried bishop could complete his task, and obtain leisure to retire to the archiepiscopal palace.

The glare of an evil hope had nevertheless brightened the blackness of his guilty soul when Cauchon reached this magnificent abode, which was henceforth to be his own, and to be willingly shared by the blooming beauty of the baroness of Commercy. He prepared to alight, and as usual the obsequious canon Perrinet was in attendance at the portal.

"Traitorous slave!" exclaimed Cauchon, the moment he perceived him. "Thou art here in good time to have the Church's livery stripped from thy back, for, since thy false pilgrimage to Corbeil, I have gone over to the opinion of my good and wise lord, the primate, and find thee altogether unworthy to wear it. Strip him of his robe,

my Burgundians! He betrayed your leader, Franquet, to the vile woman who is gone! Strip him, and cast him forth to beg or starve as better pleases him."

"My lord, it needs not; I was about to request your permission to depart, leaving my mantle with you—its scarlet is dyed too deeply in innocent blood!" replied the desperate and exasperated canon, whose anger, indeed, carried him beyond all bounds. "But perhaps your lordship is not so well aware as I am that this palace has lost its main attraction to us both with my lady of Commercy, who within this hour departed with my lord Sir John Fastolfe, knight of the Garter, who doubtless purposes to restore her, at his leisure, to the good and wise prelate her uncle, and your superior as well as mine!"

The bishop of Beauvais did not, apparently, believe this intelligence. He gazed incredulously at the speaker, and perceived a fiendish joy in his eyes that could not be doubted. He set his foot hurriedly to the stirrup to alight, missed it, and fell over his mule upon the stones before the palace. He was raised, but his terrified domestics perceived that their lord was struck with apoplexy!

Cauchon survived to linger for years in a dreadful form of paralysis which reduced one half of his body to a species of living death. He lived to make his submission to Charles VII., and to return to his diocese in order to make way for a new archbishop of Rouen,—a dignity to which in his infirm state he could no longer pretend. He lived to hear of the marriage of Sir John Fastolfe with the baroness of Commercy, which event occurred about a year after the death of the Maid of Orleans, by the desire and procurement, it is said, of her uncle of Rheims.

It is to be remarked, indeed, that few who had any share in the destruction of Jeanne d'Arc came to quiet ends, or enjoyed the fruits of the deed as they had expected. The regent Bedford, worn out with evils and care and grief at finding the impulse which the Maid had given to France continually gain in force, died not long after her disastrous close. The deplorable destinies of Henry VI. are too deeply scarred in our history to need pointing out. Despised puppet of the furious factions of the Roses, he lived to lose two crowns, wife, children, reason, existence itself, by murtherous hands! The majority of the cruel English nobles who had so ruthlessly urged on her doom, perished in the course of those desolating civil wars. Talbot himself, many years after the death of the Maid of Orleans, might be said to fall beneath her avenging spirit—for the spirit she had aroused in France vanquished and slew himself and his heroic son in the last pitched battle fought by the English in France to maintain their dominion over it.

The baroness of Commercy, as well as her husband, Sir John Fastolfe, died renowned for piety, and their extensive benefactions to the Church. Great coldness and alienation was visible between them during nearly the whole of their married life, and they died childless, dedicating their vast riches to the foundation and upholding of reli-

gious edifices. In especial Sir John was remarkable for the liberality of his donations to the Church; but something of this devotion in both might perhaps have been inspired by less praiseworthy motives than ecclesiastical records certify,—by remorse for their injustice towards Jeanne d'Arc.

The lady of La Trimouille, in her poetical chronicle, expressly records the arrival of Wulfstan of Warbois in the French court, with the ashes and half-burned heart of the Maid of Orleans. But as she was not present at his interview with Charless VII., we find no specific account given of the scene. Only she observes in general, that for several weeks after the king would share in no disports, and was frequently observed to have tears in his eyes. She notes, moreover, that from the moment he received certain intelligence of the Maid's doom—which he had not, possibly, in his indolence and enjoyments imagined so inevitable and hurried—all who had disliked and deserted her gradually lost his favour. Among these especially was La Trimouille, who became at length so provoked that he joined the faction of the nobles, and even the constable himself, in waging open war against his master. From this period also dates the king's display of the dormant energy of his character; in particular, he punished with a severity quite uncalculated the rebellion of the nobles, most of whom were of those who had so unchivalrously deserted Jeanne d'Arc. The very wife of La Trimouille records with satisfaction the punishment he underwent in a long imprisonment and grievous forfeitures.

> "De la trahison il portoit li douille,
> Et bien étoit traistre La Trimouille!"

She certifies that Charles liberally rewarded the English knight who ventured to bring him the sorrowful legacy of the Maid. The manuscript, as often happens in those ancient relics, is in this place greatly defaced and worn. But it almost seems as if there were some statement to the effect that Wulfstan of Warbois afterwards married the sister of Jeanne d'Arc, and on the conclusion of peace between France and England, settled in Domremy, on a competence derived from his warlike toils and his wife's pension from Charles VII. It appears, however, with certainty that the father of Jeanne d'Arc died of a broken heart, very shortly after tidings of her dreadful doom reached him.

> "Moult dolent était son père,
> Et ses frères et sa mère;
> Et povre viellard en mourût,
> Par trop douleur son cœur ému!"

She then records, with evident satisfaction, that the Lady of Beauty herself gradually declined in the royal favour, and finally retired from the court, finishing her days in great penitence and sorrow for her amorous misdeeds, and not without a suspicion of being poisoned; or perhaps the story was only ingeniously contrived by the enemies of the argentier, Jacques Cœur, who inserted it among other accusations by which they prevailed to effect his ruin and banishment.

Perhaps it may be only a poetical fancy of the minstreless Huéline, but she asserts, at the conclusion of her rhymed chronicle, that Charles VII. continued to repent his cruel desertion of the Maid of Orleans to his last hour. She avers that he caused her heart to be enchased in a small gold casket, and bore it always fastened by a handsome gold chain around his neck. He caused her memory to be restored, as the old French lawyers styled the reversal of a judgment, when he himself was sufficiently so to enforce the necessary proofs, in Rouen. The minstreless adds, that when dying of a broken heart, and of the starvation to which he condemned himself in dread of the parricidal designs to poison him imputed to his son and successor, the unhappy king frequently wept for hours over his treasured relic, exclaiming, "Ah! pure and woful heart, I am fitly punished for leaving thee to so sad a doom, in mine own! Jeanne, my friend, pray for me in heaven, that I may have a welcome there! Ah, thou didst love me so well! well I know thou hast forgiven me!"

THE END.

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